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SKYWAY to TOKYO
A torpedo is launched from the air. The target – a Japanese aircraft carrier !
M25

4 ALL-ACTION ISSUES EVERY MONTH

★ No. 193 **TOUGH TACTICS**
He was forced to fight for a cause that he hated !

★ No. 194 **FIGHT TO SURVIVE**
If the enemy did not kill them, they still faced the hostile desert.

★ No. 195 **THE DARKEST HOUR**
Would the dawn of freedom from fear and conflict never come ?

★ No. 196 **NONE BUT THE BRAVE**
Death had no terrors for him . . .

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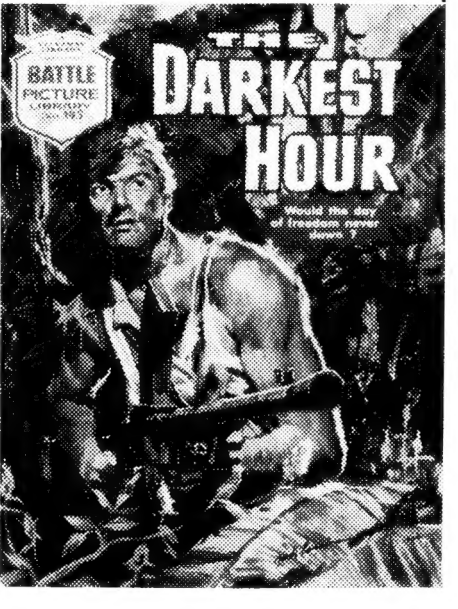

SKYWAY TO TOKYO

NEVER BEFORE IN THE LONG HISTORY OF WARFARE HAD THERE BEEN SUCH A LIGHTNING ADVANCE AS THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF THE PACIFIC. IN A FEW SHORT MONTHS, THE YELLOW INVADERS SWARMED FROM SINGAPORE TO THE PHILIPPINES ... ALMOST TO THE SHORES OF AUSTRALIA.

THEN THE ALLIES STRUCK BACK, ISLAND-HOPPING TO TOKYO. EACH ISLAND REGAINED PROVIDED AN ADVANCE BASE FOR OUR FIGHTER AND BOMBER AIRCRAFT. THE FLYERS CALLED IT ... 'THE HARD WAY BACK'.

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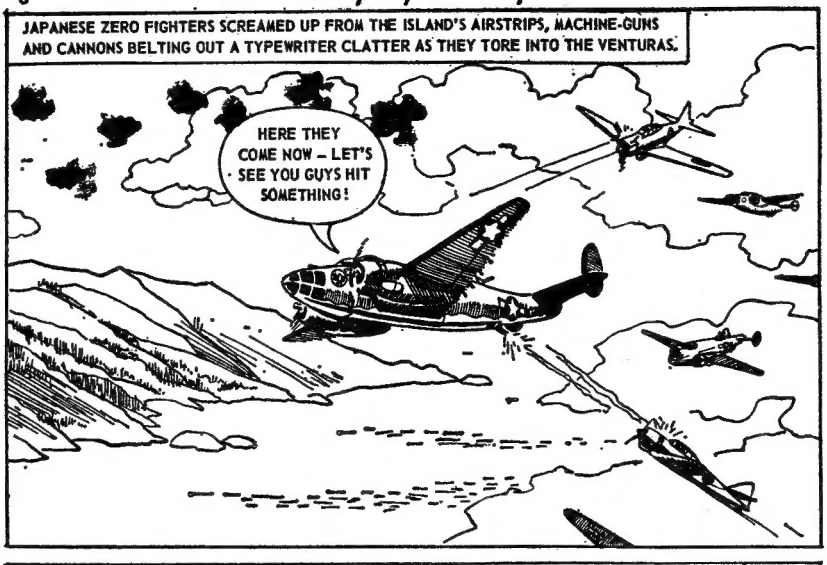
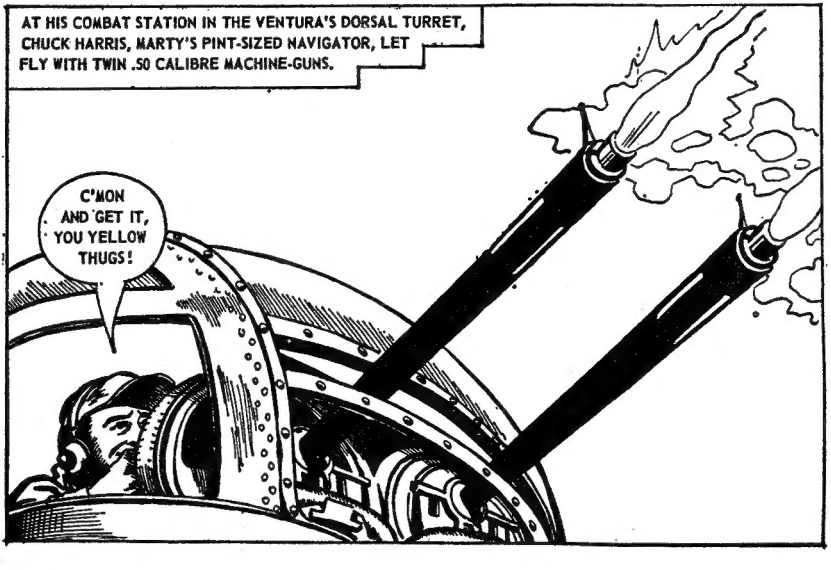
CHAPTER 1. Unwanted Aussie

LAND-BASED LOCKHEED PV-1 VENTURAS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY STRUCK THE INITIAL BLOW AT TARAPAN – BOMBING ITS VITAL HARBOUR TO DENY IT TO JAP SHIPPING.
BOMBS AWAY, MARTY.
IN THE LEADING VENTURA, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER MARTY WEST – AN EASY-GOING SOUTHERNER – GLANCED DOWN AS HE WEAVED BETWEEN HEAVY FLAK BURSTS.
HOLD ON TO YOUR HATS, FELLAS – ZEROS COMING UP!
COMBAT STATIONS, EVERYBODY!

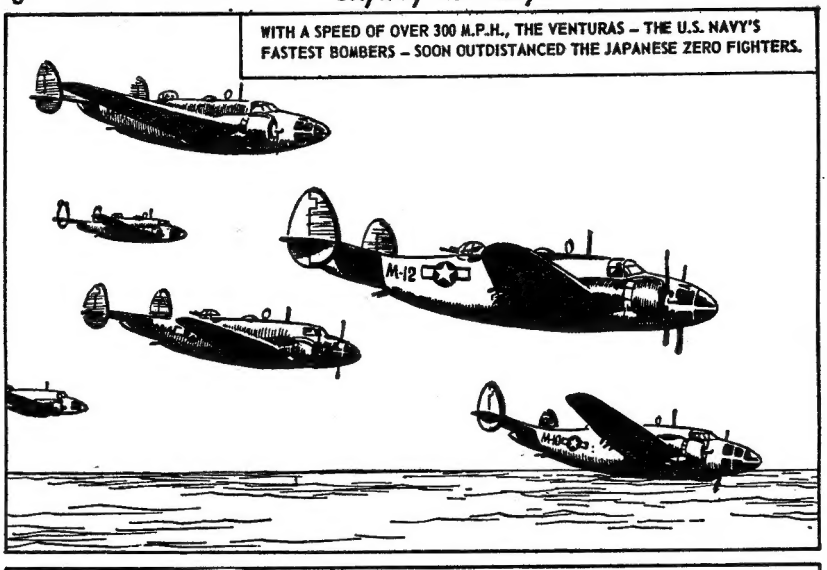

JAPANESE ZERO FIGHTERS SCREAMED UP FROM THE ISLAND'S AIRSTRIPS, MACHINE-GUNS AND CANNONS BELTING OUT A TYPEWRITER CLATTER AS THEY TORE INTO THE VENTURAS.
HERE THEY COME NOW – LET'S SEE YOU GUYS HIT SOMETHING!

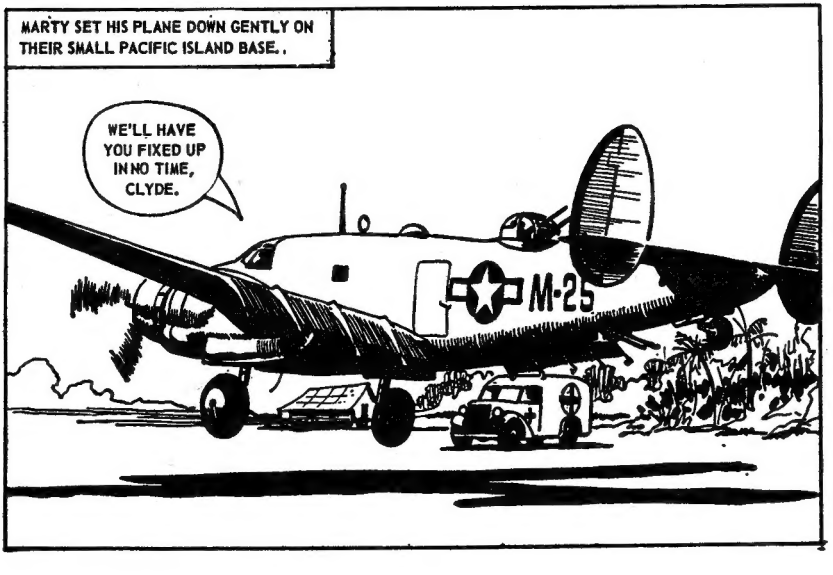

AT HIS COMBAT STATION IN THE VENTURA'S DORSAL TURRET, CHUCK HARRIS, MARTY'S PINT-SIZED NAVIGATOR, LET FLY WITH TWIN .50 CALIBRE MACHINE-GUNS.
C'MON AND GET IT, YOU YELLOW THUGS!

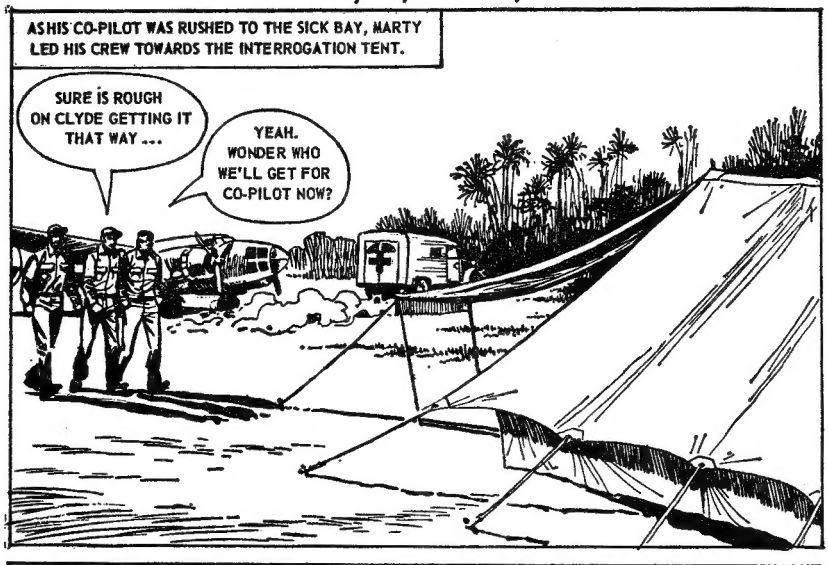
ANOTHER ZERO CAME AT THEM, SENDING A STREAM OF BULLETS INTO THE VENTURA'S CABIN. THEY NARROWLY MISSED MARTY. HIS CO-PILOT WAS NOT SO LUCKY.
HECK, THESE BOYS PLAY ROUGH! YOU HIT BAD, CLYDE?
AARGH!

FROM THE VENTRAL POSITION IN THE PLANE'S FUSELAGE, 'BIG FINN' ANDERSON – RADIOMAN 1ST CLASS AND BLOND SCANDINAVIAN GIANT – HAMMERED OUT A DEATH-DUET ON HIS TWIN FIFTIES.
BOY, OH BOY, I SURE NAILED HIM!

MARTY WHEELED HIS VENTURA FOR HOME AS THE ZERO SPUN EARTHWARDS.
FINN KNOCKED ONE DOWN, ANYWAY! STICK IT OUT, CLYDE – I'LL SOON GET YOU TO THE DOC.
GUESS I'LL LIVE, MARTY ...


WITH A SPEED OF OVER 300 M.P.H., THE VENTURAS – THE U.S. NAVY'S FASTEST BOMBERS – SOON OUTDISTANCED THE JAPANESE ZERO FIGHTERS.
M-12
M-10

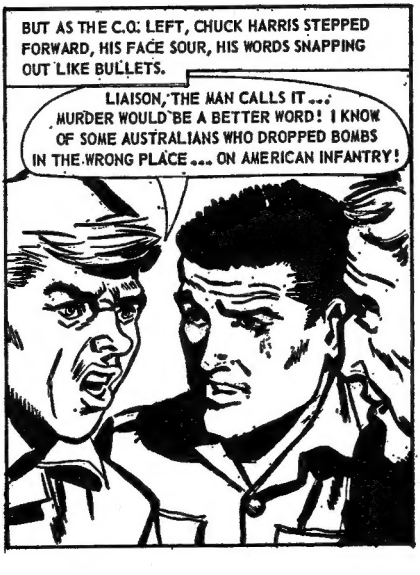

MARTY SET HIS PLANE DOWN GENTLY ON THEIR SMALL PACIFIC ISLAND BASE..
WE'LL HAVE YOU FIXED UP IN NO TIME, CLYDE.
M-25


AS HIS CO-PILOT WAS RUSHED TO THE SICK BAY, MARTY LED HIS CREW TOWARDS THE INTERROGATION TENT.
SURE IS ROUGH ON CLYDE GETTING IT THAT WAY ...
YEAH. WONDER WHO WE'LL GET FOR CO-PILOT NOW?

THEIR COMMANDING OFFICER WAITED FOR THEM, AND HE WAS NOT ALONE ... WITH HIM WAS A SQUADRON-LEADER OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.
CLYDE STOPPED SOME JAP LEAD, COMMANDER – HE WON'T BE FLYING AGAIN FOR A WHILE.
THAT SO, MARTY? I'M SURE SORRY TO HEAR IT, BUT ...

MARTY'S GLANCE TOOK IN THE AUSSIE ... LEAN AND HARD, A FIGHTING-MAN.
THIS IS SQUADRON-LEADER BILL SNOW, R.A.A.F., LIAISON OFFICER FOR THE TARAPAN INVASION. HE CAN FIT IN AS YOUR CO-PILOT IN CLYDE'S PLACE.

MARTY'S CRAGGY FACE BROKE INTO A SMILE.
HIYA, SNOWY! I FIGURE WE CAN SURE USE SOME LIAISON AROUND HERE!


BUT AS THE C.O. LEFT, CHUCK HARRIS STEPPED FORWARD, HIS FACE SOUR, HIS WORDS SNAPPING OUT LIKE BULLETS.
LIAISON, THE MAN CALLS IT ... MURDER WOULD BE A BETTER WORD! I KNOW OF SOME AUSTRALIANS WHO DROPPED BOMBS IN THE WRONG PLACE ... ON AMERICAN INFANTRY!

HASTILY, MARTY AND BIG FINN GRABBED HOLD OF CHUCK.
NOW, TAKE IT EASY, CHUCK, WILL YA?
YEAH, JUST RELAX – YOU AIN'T GOT NO PROOF OF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

CHUCK'S VOICE ROSE TO A HIGH- PITCHED SNARL OF PAIN AND HATE.
PROOF! AUSSIE BOMBS KILLED MY BROTHER ... MAYBE YOU PERSONALLY KILLED HIM, SNOW!

BILL SNOW KEPT HIS TEMPER. HE SPOKE CALMLY AS HE ANSWERED CHUCK.
I'VE ALWAYS FLOWN FIGHTERS, SPORT, SO YOU CAN'T NAIL THAT ONE ON MY DOOR. I'M SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR BROTHER, THOUGH.

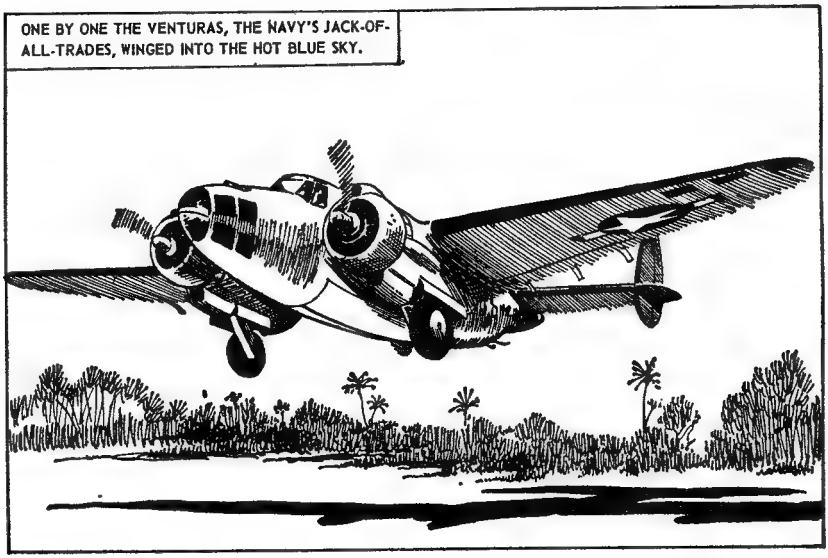
AS MARTY RELEASED HIM, CHUCK SCOWLED, TURNED SHARPLY AND WALKED AWAY. BIG FINN FROWNED.
GUESS WE'RE GONNA HAVE TROUBLE WITH CHUCK, MARTY.
YEAH, HE'S GOT AN OUTSIZE CHIP ON HIS SHOULDER – AND HIS BROTHER'S DEATH ISN'T CONFIRMED AS YET. IT'S JUST A RUMOUR.

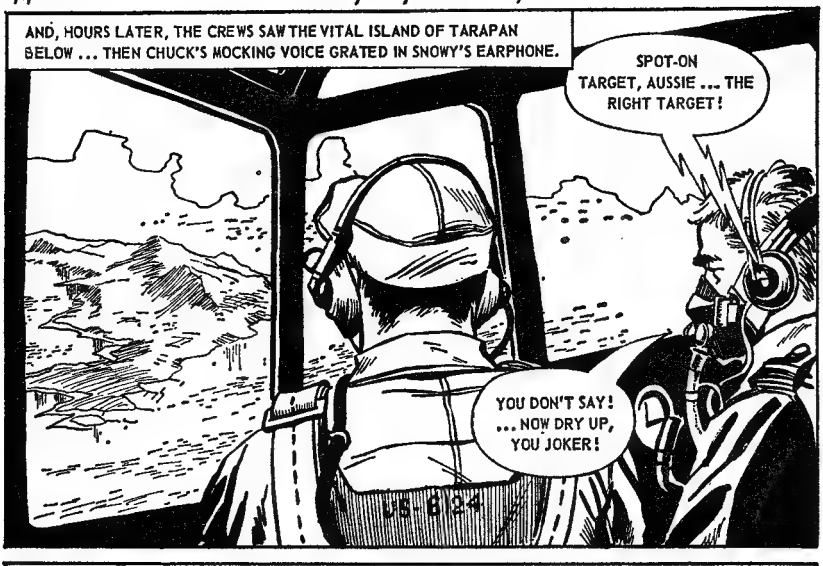
SNOWY QUICKLY SLIPPED INTO THE EASY-GOING WAYS OF THE AMERICANS ... AND ONLY CHUCK KEPT HIS DISTANCE.
SURE'S A PITY CHUCK SEEMS SET ON SPLITTING UP THE CREW THIS-AWAY.
I CAME UP THE HARD WAY ... SERGEANT-PILOT AT NEW GUINEA, GOT OUT OF SINGAPORE ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE JAPS ... THEN WITH A CARRIER OFF THE SOLOMONS ...

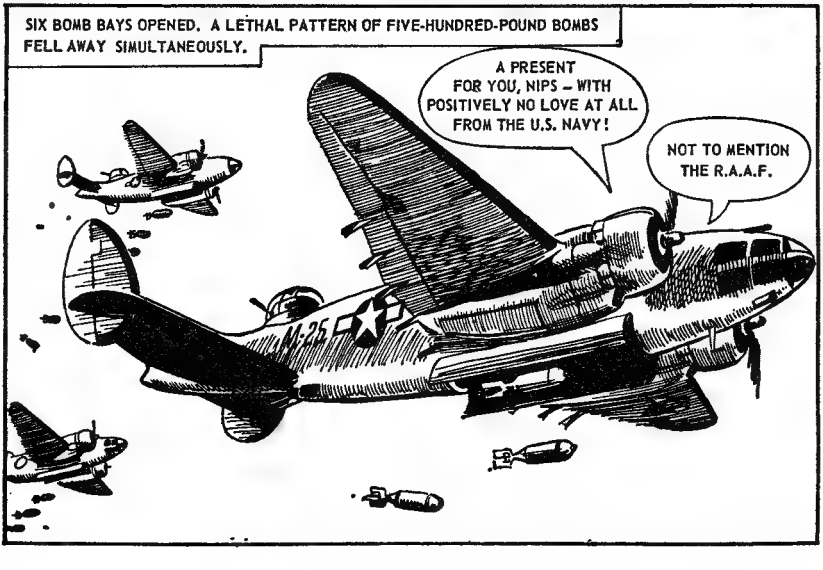
CHUCK HARRIS, THE BASEBALL PLAYER FROM MINNESOTA, SAT APART FROM HIS CREW AND NURSED HIS HATRED ...
I'LL FIX THAT AUSSIE ... I'LL FIX HIM GOOD!

NEXT MORNING, THE VENTURA CREWS WERE CALLED FOR BRIEFING. THIS WAS TO BE SNOWY'S FIRST FLIGHT WITH HIS NEW FRIENDS.
THERE'LL BE NO LET-UP FROM NOW ON – OUR NUMBER ONE JOB IS TO SOFTEN UP TARAPAN READY FOR D-DAY. THE PRESENT TRIP IS GOING TO BE A HIGH-LEVEL FLIGHT PLUS PRECISION BOMBING!

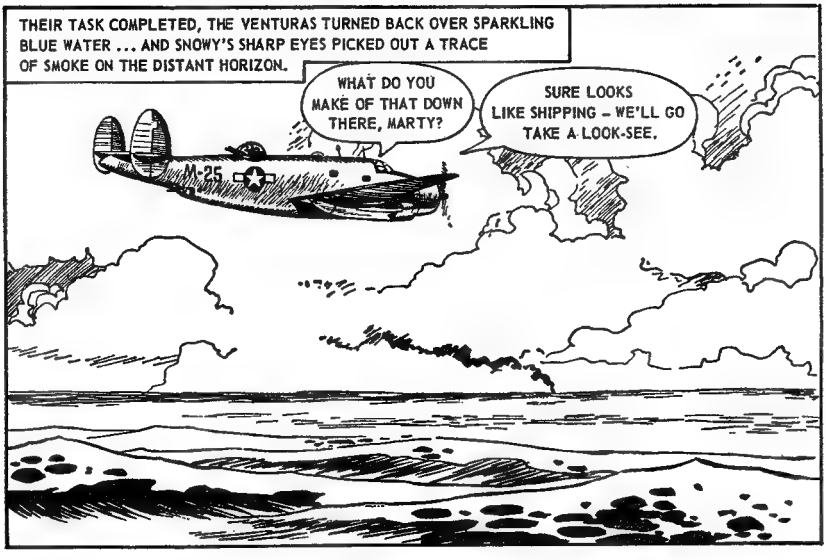
THEY WALKED OUT TO THEIR AIRCRAFT, AND CHUCK HARRIS COULD NOT RESIST A CRACK AT SNOWY'S EXPENSE.
PRECISION BOMBING ... GET IT, AUSSIE? THAT DOESN'T MEAN BOMBING OUR ALLIES!
OKAY, SPORT. YOU NEEDN'T KEEP RUBBING IT IN!

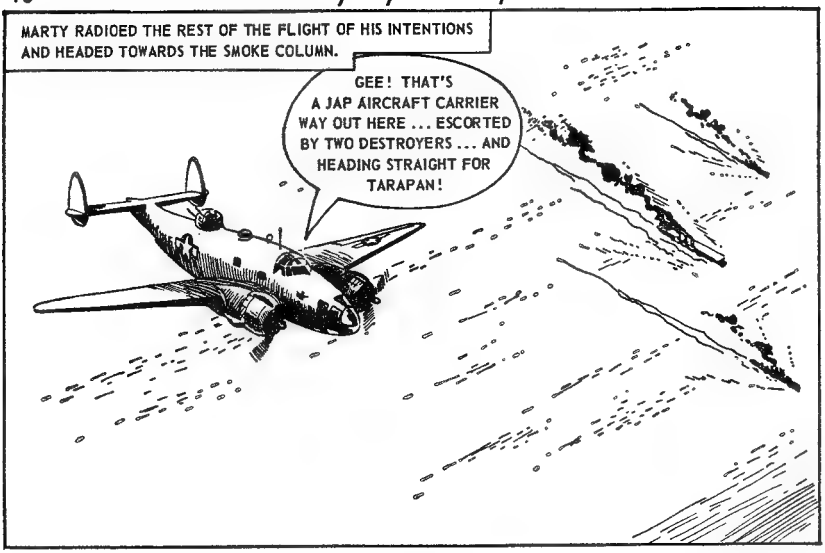

ONE BY ONE THE VENTURAS, THE NAVY'S JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES, WINGED INTO THE HOT BLUE SKY.

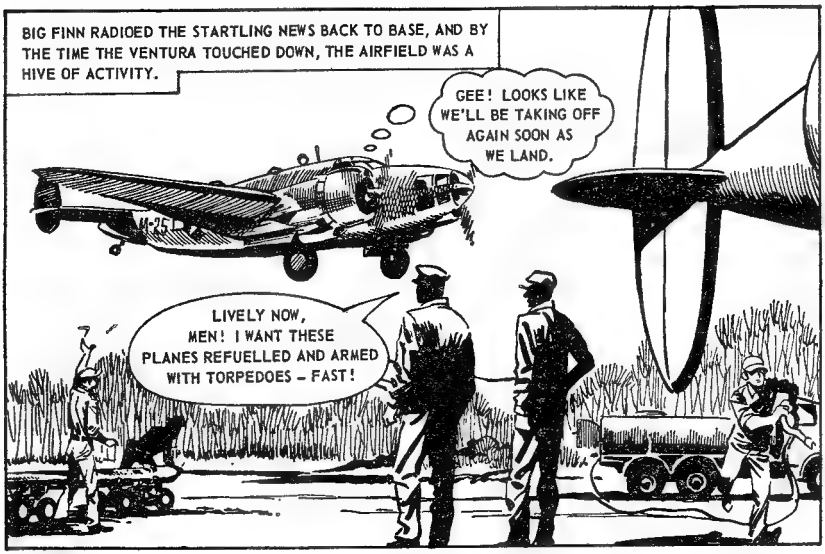

AND, HOURS LATER, THE CREWS SAW THE VITAL ISLAND OF TARAPAN BELOW ... THEN CHUCK'S MOCKING VOICE GRATED IN SNOWY'S EARPHONE.
SPOT-ON TARGET, AUSSIE ... THE RIGHT TARGET!
YOU DON'T SAY! ... NOW DRY UP, YOU JOKER!
US-624

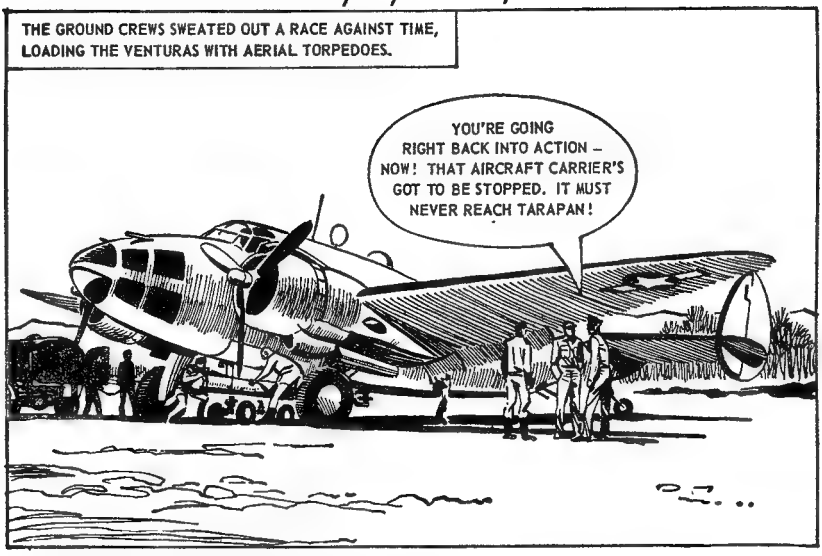

SIX BOMB BAYS OPENED. A LETHAL PATTERN OF FIVE-HUNDRED-POUND BOMBS FELL AWAY SIMULTANEOUSLY.
A PRESENT FOR YOU, NIPS – WITH POSITIVELY NO LOVE AT ALL FROM THE U.S. NAVY!
NOT TO MENTION THE R.A.A.F.
M-25

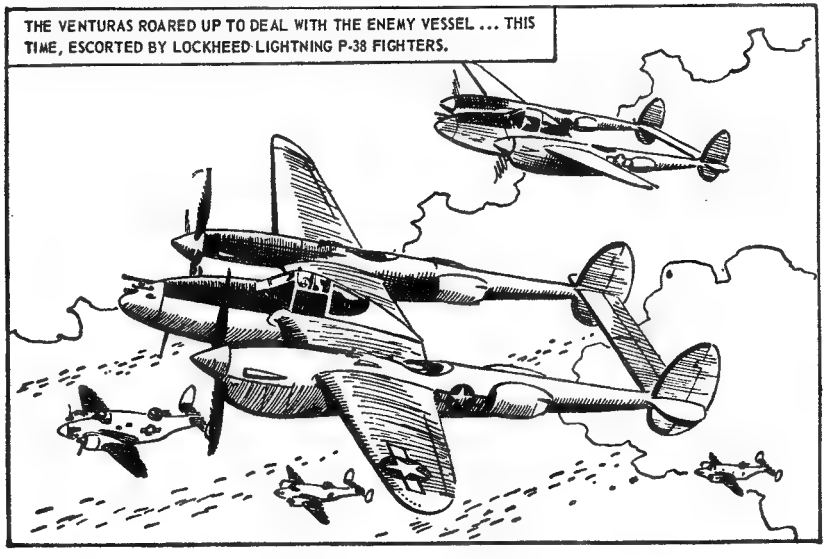
CHAPTER 2. Zeros v. Lightnings



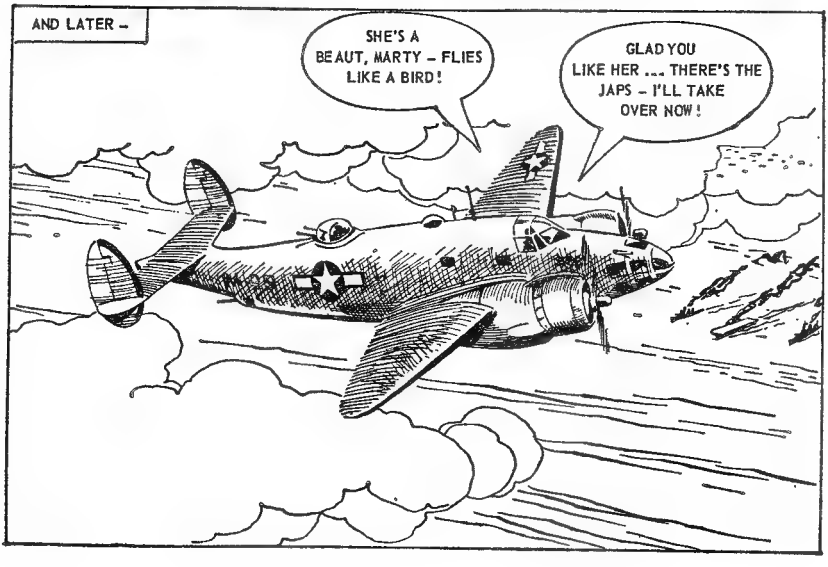

MARTY RADIOED THE REST OF THE FLIGHT OF HIS INTENTIONS AND HEADED TOWARDS THE SMOKE COLUMN.
GEE! THAT'S A JAP AIRCRAFT CARRIER WAY OUT HERE ... ESCORTED BY TWO DESTROYERS ... AND HEADING STRAIGHT FOR TARAPAN!

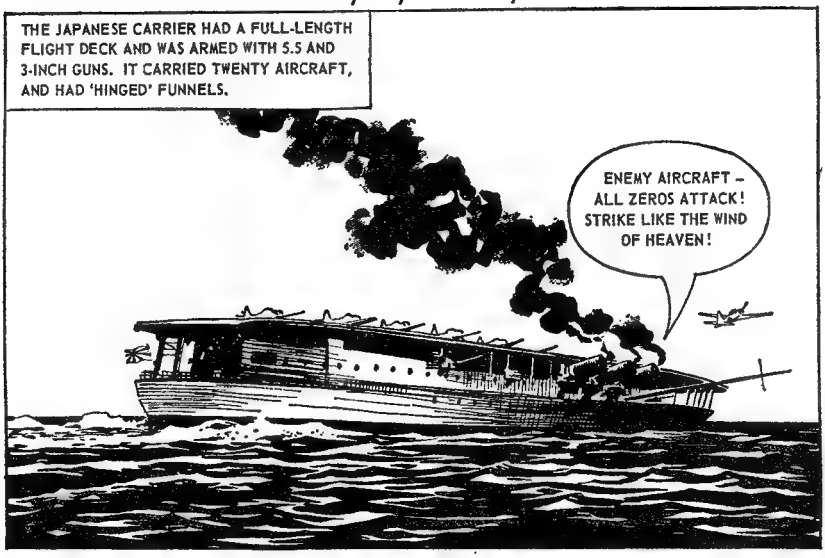

BIG FINN RADIOED THE STARTLING NEWS BACK TO BASE, AND BY THE TIME THE VENTURA TOUCHED DOWN, THE AIRFIELD WAS A HIVE OF ACTIVITY.
GEE! LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE TAKING OFF AGAIN SOON AS WE LAND.
LIVELY NOW, MEN! I WANT THESE PLANES REFUELLED AND ARMED WITH TORPEDOES – FAST!

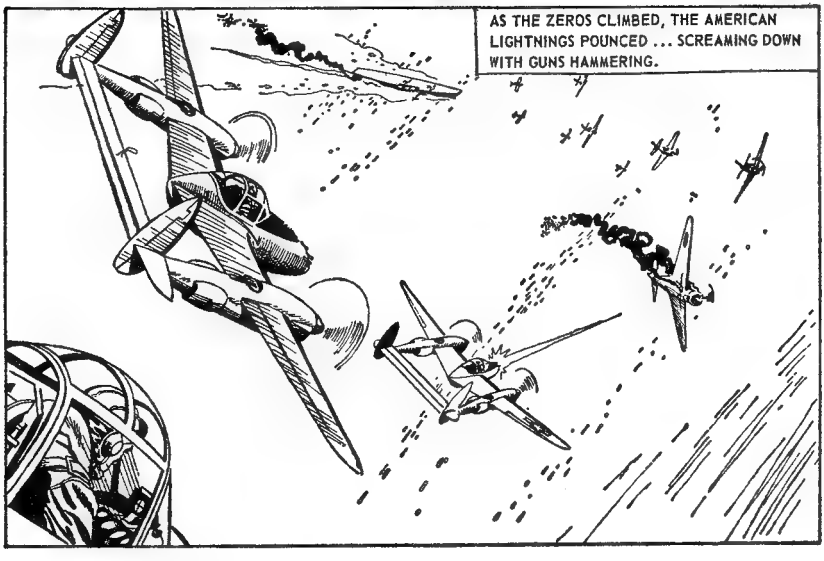

THE GROUND CREWS SWEATED OUT A RACE AGAINST TIME, LOADING THE VENTURAS WITH AERIAL TORPEDOES.
YOU'RE GOING RIGHT BACK INTO ACTION – NOW! THAT AIRCRAFT CARRIER'S GOT TO BE STOPPED. IT MUST NEVER REACH TARAPAN!


THE VENTURAS ROARED UP TO DEAL WITH THE ENEMY VESSEL ... THIS TIME, ESCORTED BY LOCKHEED LIGHTNING P-38 FIGHTERS.

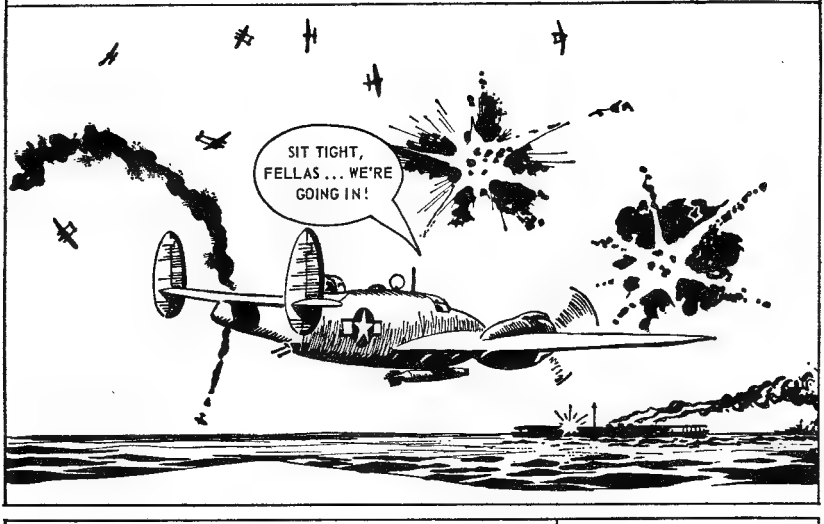
IN MARTY'S COCKPIT ...
OKAY, YOU FLY HER NOW, SNOWY – YOU'LL SOON GET THE FEEL OF HER.
I'M GAME, SPORT!
BILL SNOW FOUND THE BIG TWIN-ENGINE MONOPLANE EASY TO HANDLE.


AND LATER –
SHE'S A BEAUT, MARTY – FLIES LIKE A BIRD!
GLAD YOU LIKE HER ... THERE'S THE JAPS – I'LL TAKE OVER NOW!

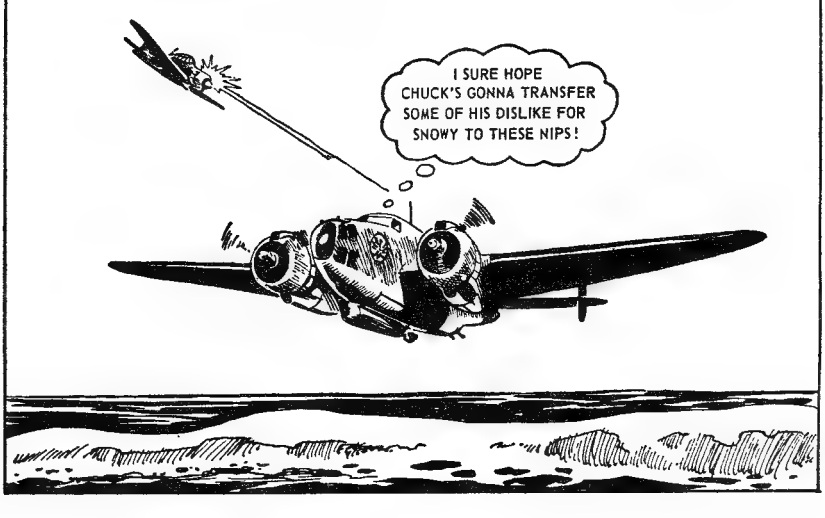

THE JAPANESE CARRIER HAD A FULL-LENGTH FLIGHT DECK AND WAS ARMED WITH 5.5 AND 3-INCH GUNS. IT CARRIED TWENTY AIRCRAFT, AND HAD 'HINGED' FUNNELS.
ENEMY AIRCRAFT – ALL ZEROS ATTACK! STRIKE LIKE THE WIND OF HEAVEN!

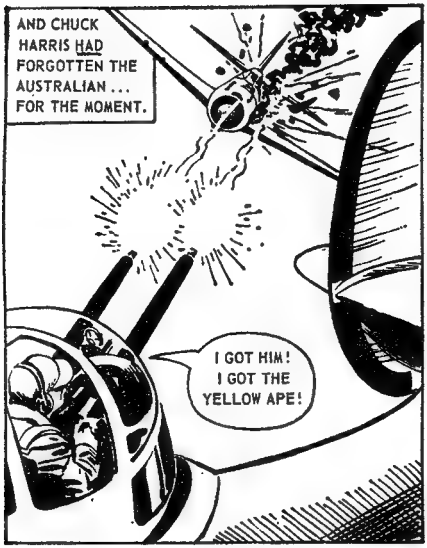

AS THE ZEROS CLIMBED, THE AMERICAN LIGHTNINGS POUNCED ... SCREAMING DOWN WITH GUNS HAMMERING.

MARTY PUSHED THE NOSE OF HIS PLANE DOWN, SLANTING IN TO ATTACK BENEATH THE WHIRLING FIGHTERS.



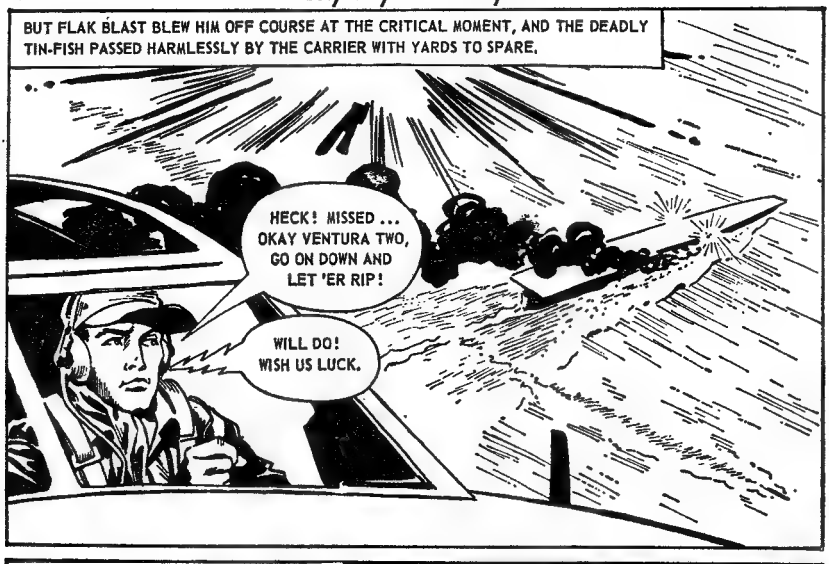
IGNORING FLAK AND ENEMY FIGHTERS, MARTY BORED IN FOR THE KILL.



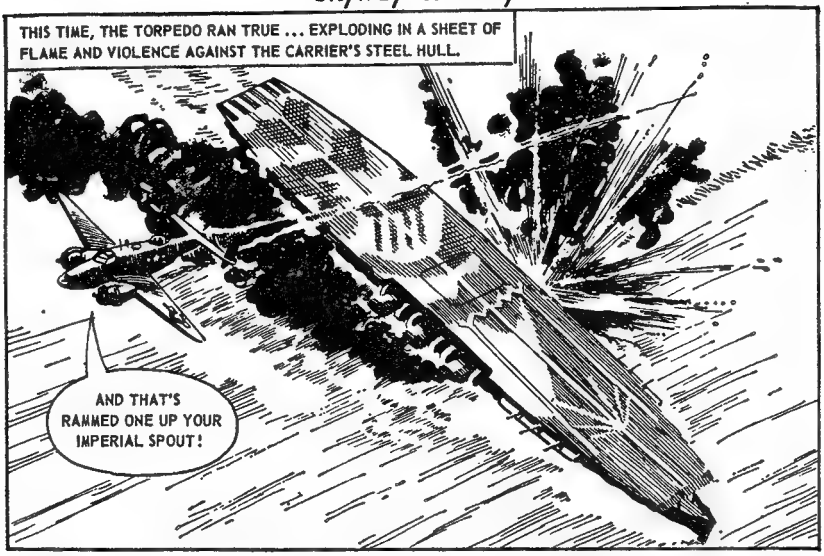

AND CHUCK HARRIS HAD FORGOTTEN THE AUSTRALIAN ... FOR THE MOMENT.
I GOT HIM! I GOT THE YELLOW APE!

THE TWO JAPANESE DESTROYERS MANOEUVRED TO PROTECT THE CARRIER. THEY HURLED A FURIOUS FLAK BARRAGE SKYWARD, BUT THE VENTURA KEPT TO ITS COURSE. SNOWY WAS FILLED WITH ADMIRATION.
THESE YANKS ARE GAME ... GAME AS NED KELLY!

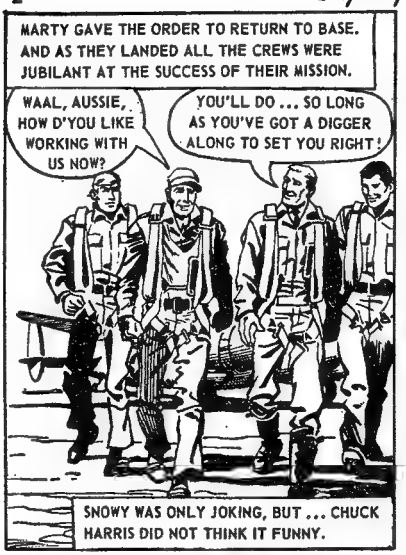
MARTY FOUGHT TO KEEP HIS AIRCRAFT STEADY, THEN JERKED THE RELEASE ... AND THE TWENTY-ONE INCH TORPEDO FELL AWAY.
THAT'S ALL FOR YOU, NIPS – AND DON'T SAY I NEVER GIVE YOU ANYTHING!


BUT FLAK BLAST BLEW HIM OFF COURSE AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT, AND THE DEADLY TIN-FISH PASSED HARMLESSLY BY THE CARRIER WITH YARDS TO SPARE.
HECK! MISSED ... OKAY VENTURA TWO, GO ON DOWN AND LET 'ER RIP!
WILL DO! WISH US LUCK.

THE SECOND VENTURA ROARED IN WITH ITS CARGO OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE.


THIS TIME, THE TORPEDO RAN TRUE ... EXPLODING IN A SHEET OF FLAME AND VIOLENCE AGAINST THE CARRIER'S STEEL HULL.
AND THAT'S RAMMED ONE UP YOUR IMPERIAL SPOUT!

TWO MORE TORPEDOES STRUCK HOME BEFORE THE VENTURAS EXPENDED THEIR LOAD. THEN THE CARRIER TURNED AND LIMPED AWAY. SNOWY NODDED WITH SATISFACTION.
GOOD ON YER, MATES. THEY'VE HAD ENOUGH!
YEAH, SHE SURE AIN'T GONNA REACH TARAPAN IN THAT CONDITION!


MARTY GAVE THE ORDER TO RETURN TO BASE. AND AS THEY LANDED ALL THE CREWS WERE JUBILANT AT THE SUCCESS OF THEIR MISSION.
WAAL, AUSSIE, HOW D'YOU LIKE WORKING WITH US NOW?
YOU'LL DO ... SO LONG AS YOU'VE GOT A DIGGER ALONG TO SET YOU RIGHT!
SNOWY WAS ONLY JOKING, BUT ... CHUCK HARRIS DID NOT THINK IT FUNNY.

WITH HIS BROTHER'S DEATH STILL PREYING ON HIS MIND, CHUCK'S TEMPER FLARED UP.
THAT'S FIGHTING TALK, AUSSIE! WE DON'T NEED YOU ALONG!
PACK IT UP, CHUCK – I WAS ONLY KIDDING YOU.

BILL SNOW WAS NOT LOOKING FOR A FIGHT ... BUT CHUCK SEEMED DETERMINED TO FORCE ONE ON HIM.
C'MON – FIGHT, YOU AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER!

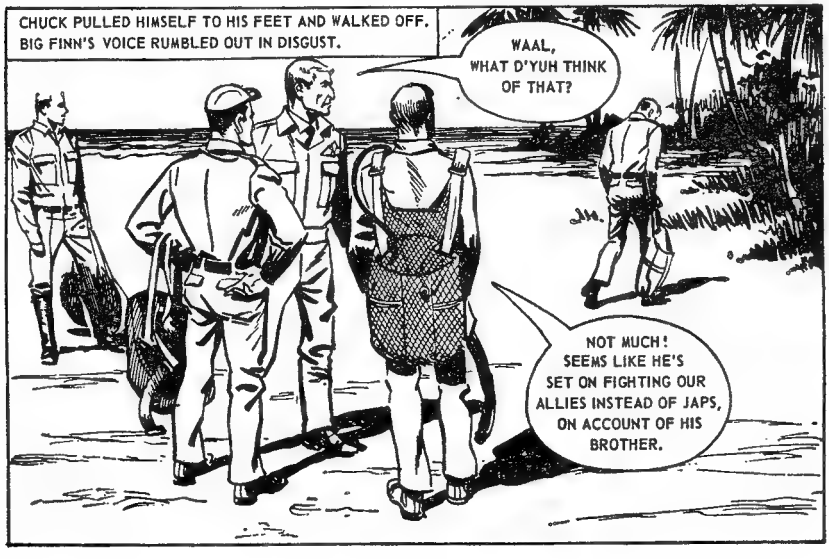
THE AUSTRALIAN CONSIDERED HE'D TAKEN PLENTY FROM CHUCK HARRIS. AND HE WASN'T TAKING ANY MORE.
ALL RIGHT, YOU JOKER, IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT!

CHUCK HURLED HIMSELF AT SNOWY, FISTS SWINGING WILDLY, HIS FACE TWISTED IN A MASK OF FURY.
TAKE THAT!

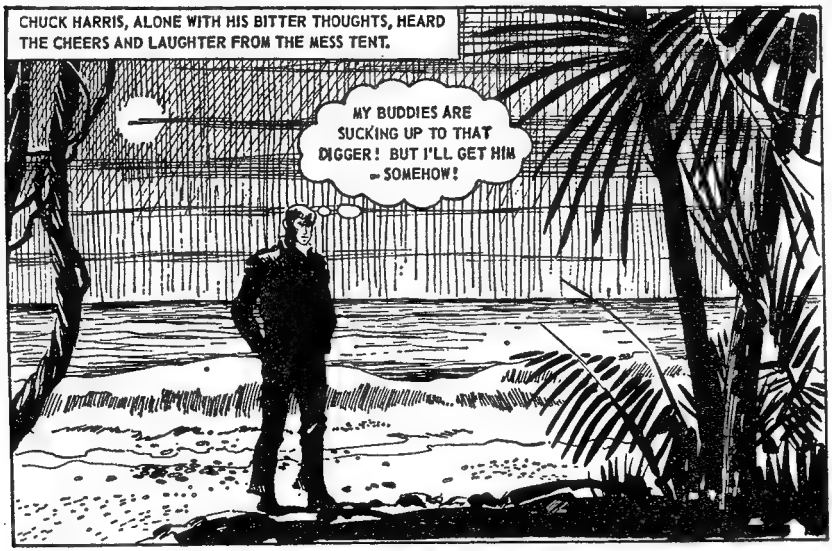
BILL SNOW SLAMMED PUNCHES INTO THE AMERICAN WITH DEADLY PRECISION.
SAY, WHAT'S THE FIGHT ABOUT, MARTY?
JUST ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF ALLIED CO-OPERATION!

SNOWY FINISHED IT QUICKLY WITH A POWER-PACKED DRIVE TO THE POINT OF THE JAW. CHUCK HIT THE GROUND – HARD.
NOW, JACK IT UP, YOU DINGO ... I'M WILLING TO SHAKE IF YOU ARE.

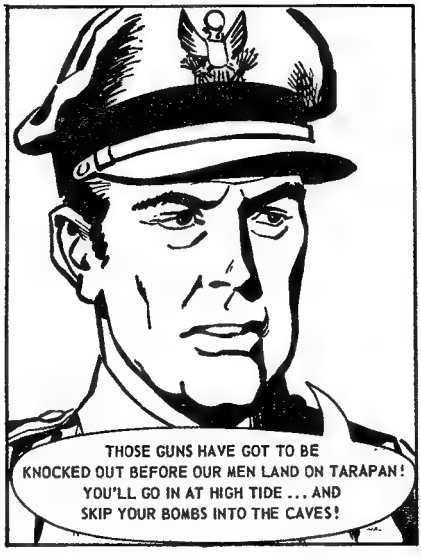
CHUCK, BREATHING HEAVILY, IGNORED SNOWY'S OUT-STRETCHED HAND.
C'MON, CHUCK – SHAKE AND CALL IT QUITS.
NOT ME! NOT WITH AN AUSSIE SAVAGE!


CHUCK PULLED HIMSELF TO HIS FEET AND WALKED OFF. BIG FINN'S VOICE RUMBLED OUT IN DISGUST.
WAAL, WHAT D'YUH THINK OF THAT?
NOT MUCH! SEEMS LIKE HE'S SET ON FIGHTING OUR ALLIES INSTEAD OF JAPS, ON ACCOUNT OF HIS BROTHER.

CHAPTER 3. Bowling-Alley Bombers

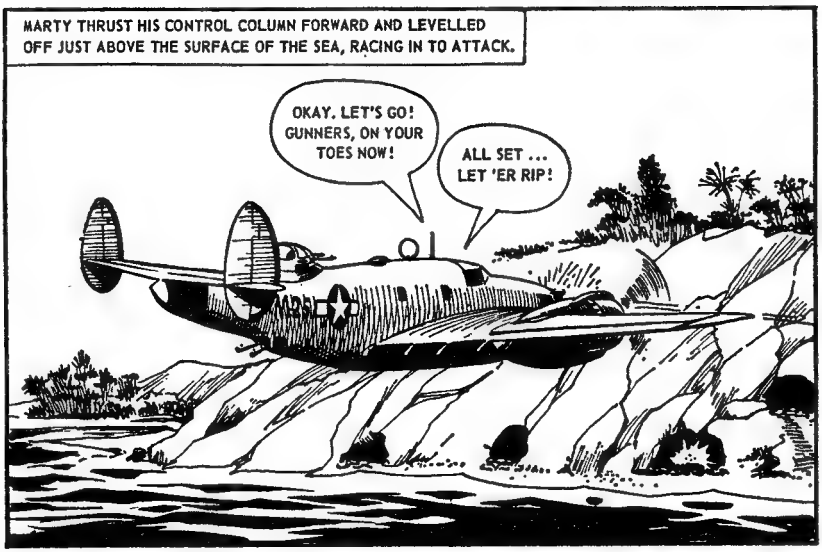


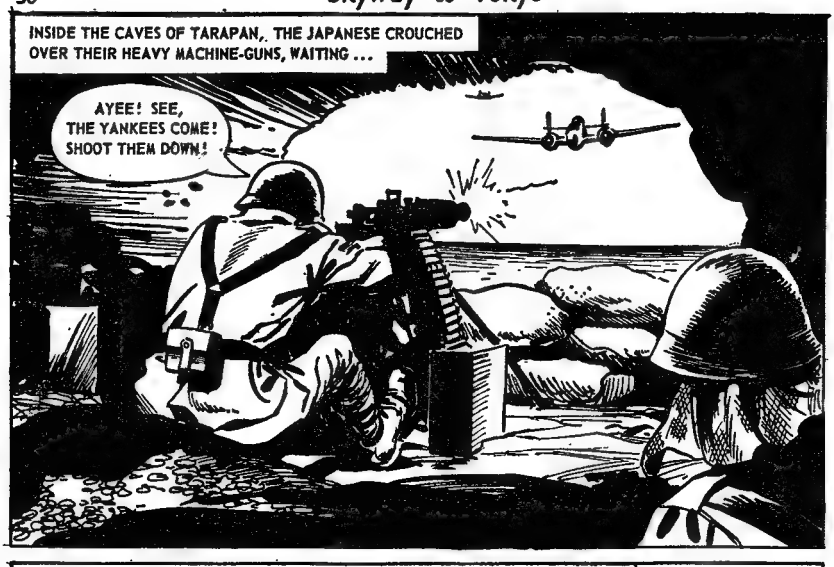
THE SQUADRON COMMANDER CALLED AN URGENT BRIEFING NEXT DAY. HIS VOICE WAS TERSE.
THIS IS GOING TO BE A LOW-LEVEL MISSION! THESE PHOTOS REVEAL CAVES IN THE CLIFF FACE OVERLOOKING THE BEACH – AND THE JAPS HAVE SITED HEAVY MACHINE-GUNS IN THEM!

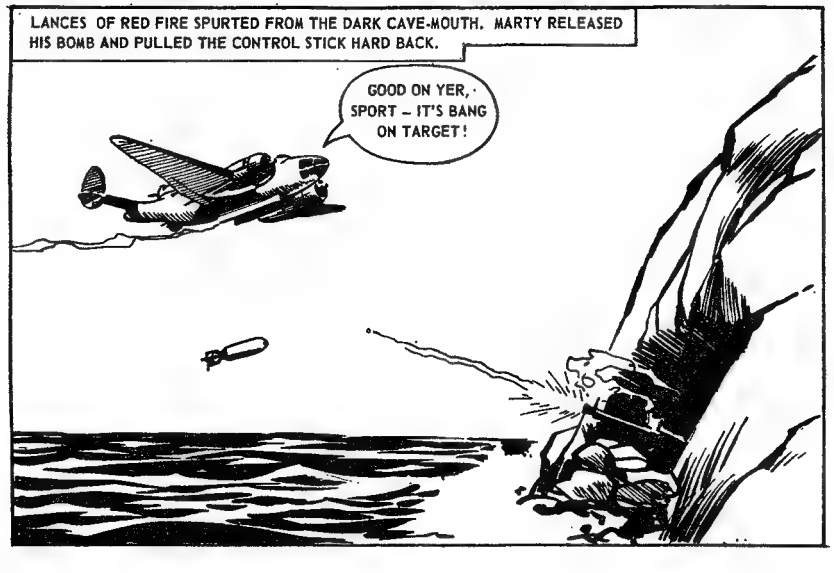

THOSE GUNS HAVE GOT TO BE KNOCKED OUT BEFORE OUR MEN LAND ON TARAPAN! YOU'LL GO IN AT HIGH TIDE ... AND SKIP YOUR BOMBS INTO THE CAVES!

BILL SNOW'S LIPS TWISTED IN A WRY SMILE AS HE STUDIED THE PHOTOGRAPHS.

THE VENTURAS TOOK TO THE AIR ONCE MORE, AND SPED ACROSS THE BLUE PACIFIC TO THE JAP-HELD ISLAND OF TARAPAN.
SOME CAPER THIS, MARTY! IT'S SUICIDE, IF YOU ASK ME!
YEAH, IT'S A RUGGED DEAL RIGHT ENOUGH.


MARTY THRUST HIS CONTROL COLUMN FORWARD AND LEVELLED OFF JUST ABOVE THE SURFACE OF THE SEA, RACING IN TO ATTACK.
OKAY. LET'S GO! GUNNERS, ON YOUR TOES NOW!
ALL SET ... LET 'ER RIP!


INSIDE THE CAVES OF TARAPAN, THE JAPANESE CROUCHED OVER THEIR HEAVY MACHINE-GUNS, WAITING ...
AYEE! SEE, THE YANKEES COME! SHOOT THEM DOWN!


LANCES OF RED FIRE SPURTED FROM THE DARK CAVE-MOUTH. MARTY RELEASED HIS BOMB AND PULLED THE CONTROL STICK HARD BACK.
GOOD ON YER, SPORT – IT'S BANG ON TARGET!

THE BOMB 'SKIPPED' THE WATER ... BOUNCING OVER THE SURFACE AND LEAPING INTO THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE.

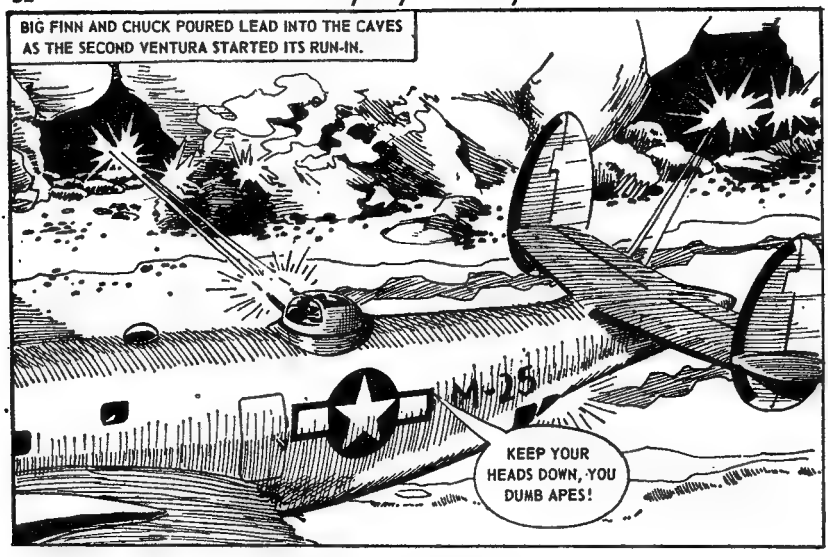
NEI, NEI ... RUN, MEN OF NIPPON! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

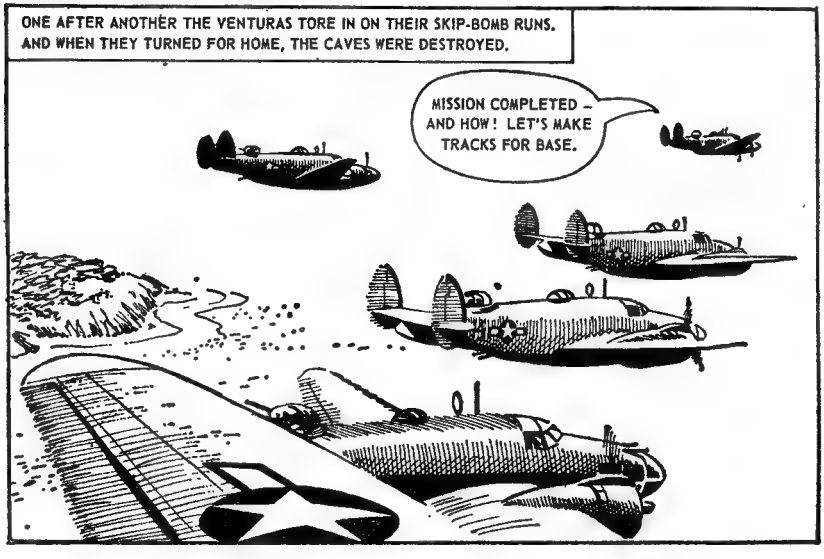
BUT THOSE TRAPPED IN THE CAVE HAD NO CHANCE TO RUN. THEY DIED IN A VIOLENT HOLOCAUST OF FLAME AND FLYING METAL AND ROCK.

AS THE NEXT AIRCRAFT WENT IN, MARTY CIRCLED TO GIVE COVERING FIRE.

KEEP HER STRAIGHT AND LEVEL, NUMBER TWO. I'M COVERING YOU.

THANKS, MARTY – GOING IN NOW!


BIG FINN AND CHUCK POURED LEAD INTO THE CAVES AS THE SECOND VENTURA STARTED ITS RUN-IN.
KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN, YOU DUMB APES!


ONE AFTER ANOTHER THE VENTURAS TORE IN ON THEIR SKIP-BOMB RUNS. AND WHEN THEY TURNED FOR HOME, THE CAVES WERE DESTROYED.
MISSION COMPLETED – AND HOW! LET'S MAKE TRACKS FOR BASE.

AS BILL SNOW STEPPED FROM THE AIRCRAFT, HE WATCHED CHUCK GO OFF ALONE – AND FELT SORRY FOR HIM.

THE STUPID COOT! WHY CAN'T HE BE FRIENDLY? WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S UP TO ME ...

WITH LONG STRIDES, THE AUSTRALIAN SQUADRON-LEADER SOON CAUGHT UP WITH CHUCK.

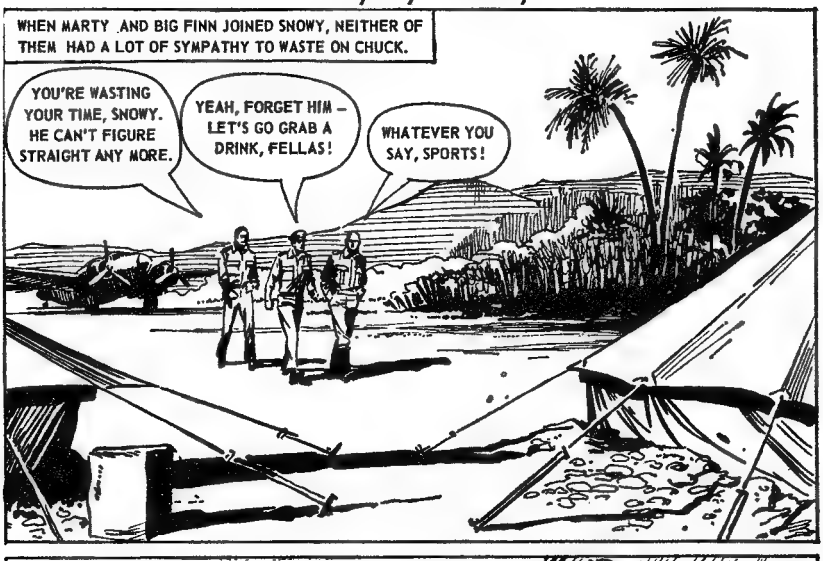
'NOW LISTEN, MATE! I DIDN'T KILL YOUR BROTHER, SO WHY –

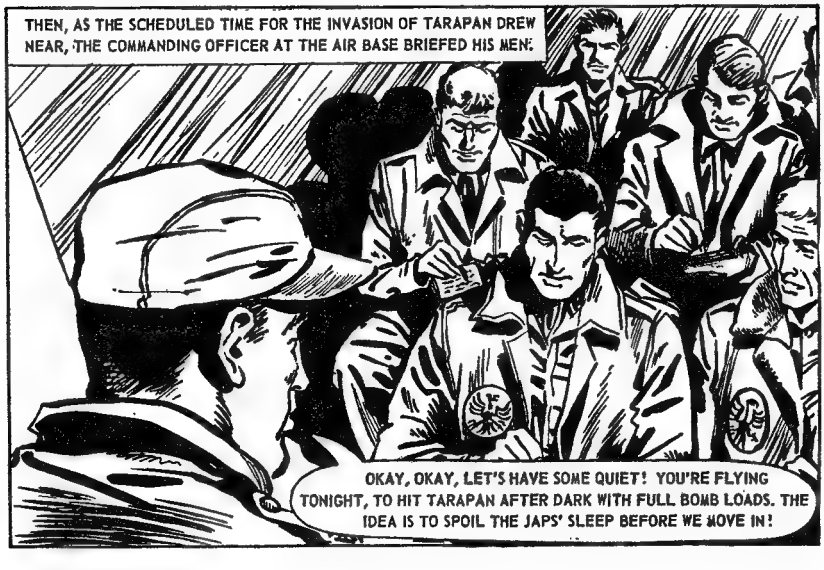
TAKE YOUR FILTHY PAWS OFF ME!

CHUCK HARRIS STRUCK THE FRIENDLY HAND AWAY, AND WALKED ON – STILL ALONE.

GET LOST, JERK!

I'LL GIVE HIM TIME ... HE'LL GET OVER IT.


WHEN MARTY AND BIG FINN JOINED SNOWY, NEITHER OF THEM HAD A LOT OF SYMPATHY TO WASTE ON CHUCK.
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME, SNOWY. HE CAN'T FIGURE STRAIGHT ANY MORE.
YEAH, FORGET HIM – LET'S GO GRAB A DRINK, FELLAS!
WHATEVER YOU SAY, SPORTS!


THEN, AS THE SCHEDULED TIME FOR THE INVASION OF TARAPAN DREW NEAR, THE COMMANDING OFFICER AT THE AIR BASE BRIEFED HIS MEN:
OKAY, OKAY, LET'S HAVE SOME QUIET! YOU'RE FLYING TONIGHT, TO HIT TARAPAN AFTER DARK WITH FULL BOMB LOADS. THE IDEA IS TO SPOIL THE JAPS' SLEEP BEFORE WE MOVE IN!

AND SO, AT DUSK, SIX HEAVILY-LADEN VENTURAS TAXIED ALONG THE RUNWAY, GATHERED SPEED AND LIFTED INTO THE TROPIC SKY.

MARTY'S 'EAGLE' VENTURA WAS ACTING AS PATHFINDER ACROSS THE PACIFIC IN THE DARK NIGHT HOURS, WHEN –

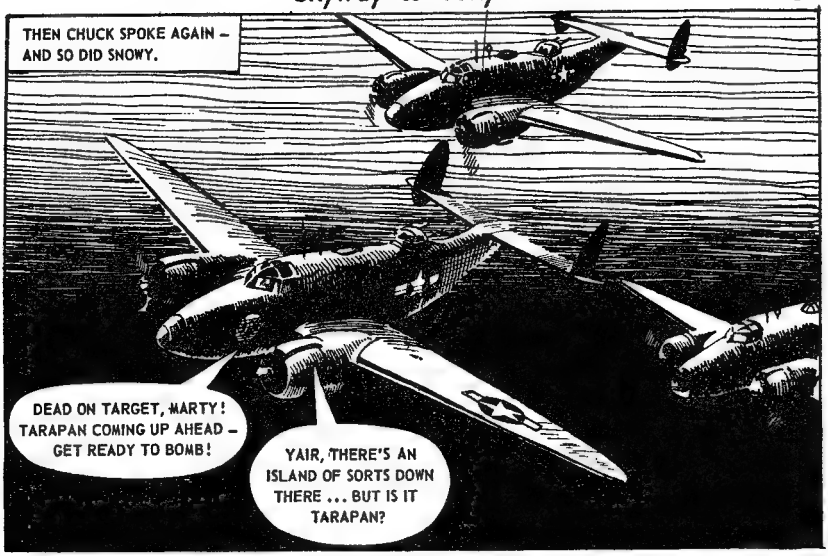
HEY, OUR COMPASS IS ACTING SCREWY!

GOSH! WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

MARTY SPOKE OVER THE INTERCOM TO CHUCK, WHO SAT AT THE NAVIGATOR'S DESK.
IT'S UP TO YOU NOW, CHUCK – MY COMPASS HAS GONE HAYWIRE!
SKIPPER, RELAX! YOU KNOW YOU'VE GOT THE BEST DARNED NAVIGATOR IN THE BUSINESS!

BUT AS THE PLANE ROARED THROUGH THE DARK, MOONLESS NIGHT OVER AN EMPTY SEA, A DOUBT SLOWLY EDGED INTO SNOWY'S MIND.
I'VE A NASTY SUSPICION WE'RE NOT ON COURSE ... AND MARTY ADMITTED CHUCK CAN'T FIGURE STRAIGHT NOW!

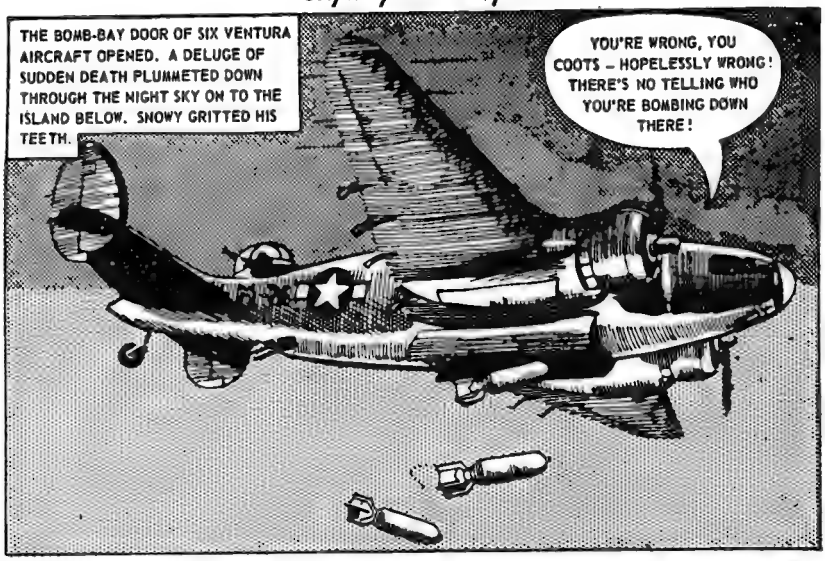
MARTY SHARED SNOWY'S DOUBT.
RECKON I'LL CHECK WITH THE BOYS BEHIND.
THAT'S NO GOOD ... THEY'RE ONLY FOLLOWING US!

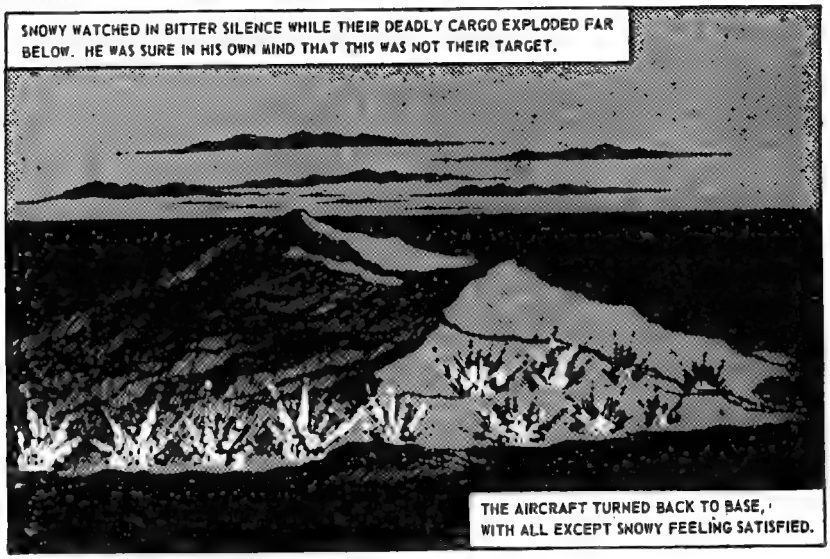

THEN CHUCK SPOKE AGAIN – AND SO DID SNOWY.
DEAD ON TARGET, MARTY! TARAPAN COMING UP AHEAD – GET READY TO BOMB!
YAIR, THERE'S AN ISLAND OF SORTS DOWN THERE ... BUT IS IT TARAPAN?

THE DOUBT IN SNOWY'S MIND GREW BIGGER ... TILL HE FELT IN HIS BONES THAT CHUCK WAS WRONG.
MARTY! I'VE GOT A FEELING THIS ISN'T THE RIGHT ISLAND – THERE MIGHT BE AUSSIES DOWN THERE. YOU MUSTN'T RISK BOMBING OUR OWN LADS!

CHUCK HARRIS HEARD HIM OVER THE INTERCOM AND CAME STORMING INTO THE PILOT'S CABIN.
LOOK HERE, DIGGER, JUST WHO D'YUH THINK YOU ARE? I'M NAVIGATING THIS MISSION, NOT YOU!
NOTHING PERSONAL, CHUCK ... BUT ANYONE CAN MAKE A MISTAKE!
TAKE IT EASY, FELLAS! NOW, CHUCK, ARE YOU SURE THIS IS TARAPAN?

MARTY WEST TOOK A LONG BREATH. HE WAS THE PATROL COMMANDER ... AND HE ALONE HAD TO MAKE THE DECISION.
SURE, I'M SURE!
OKAY, CHUCK, THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME ... WE'RE BOMBING!


THE BOMB-BAY DOOR OF SIX VENTURA AIRCRAFT OPENED. A DELUGE OF SUDDEN DEATH PLUMMETED DOWN THROUGH THE NIGHT SKY ON TO THE ISLAND BELOW. SNOWY GRITTED HIS TEETH.
YOU'RE WRONG, YOU COOTS – HOPELESSLY WRONG! THERE'S NO TELLING WHO YOU'RE BOMBING DOWN THERE!


SNOWY WATCHED IN BITTER SILENCE WHILE THEIR DEADLY CARGO EXPLODED FAR BELOW. HE WAS SURE IN HIS OWN MIND THAT THIS WAS NOT THEIR TARGET.
THE AIRCRAFT TURNED BACK TO BASE, WITH ALL EXCEPT SNOWY FEELING SATISFIED.

THE SQUADRON COMMANDER WAS WAITING IMPATIENTLY TO LEARN THE RESULT OF THEIR STRIKE WHEN THEY LANDED.
WAAL, HOW'D IT GO, MARTY? NO TROUBLE?
I GUESS WE HIT TARAPAN OKAY.

CHUCK PUSHED FORWARD QUICKLY. THIS WAS HIS CHANCE TO SHOW UP SNOWY – AND HE SEIZED IT WITH BOTH HANDS.
I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO REPORT, COMMANDER. THE AUSSIE TRIED TO STOP US BOMBING ... SAID I CAN'T NAVIGATE! AND I WON'T STAND FOR THAT KIND OF INTERFERENCE!

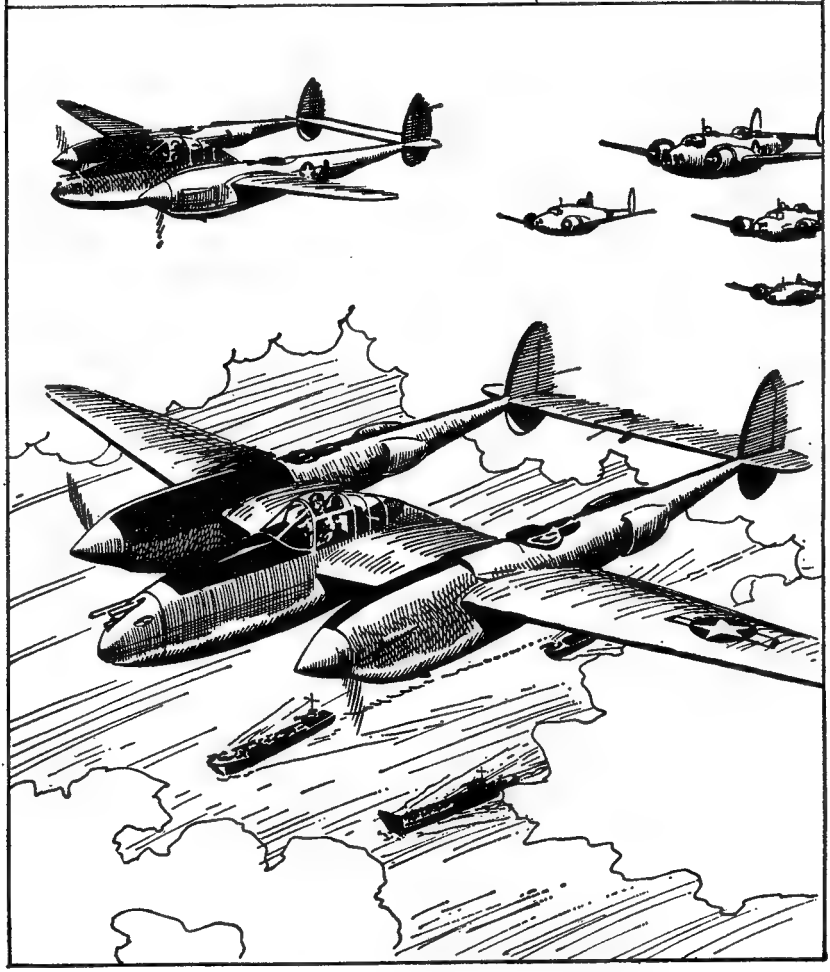
THE COMMANDER LOOKED STARTLED. HE SHOT A QUICK GLANCE AT SNOWY, THEN TURNED TO MARTY.
THAT SO, MARTY?
I'M AFRAID IT IS, SIR –
THE COMMANDER THEN TURNED TO SNOWY.
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO SAY, SQUADRON-LEADER?
I'M SURE WE BOMBED THE WRONG ISLAND, SIR – AND MY WARNING WAS IGNORED. OUR COMPASS WENT COCK-EYED ... AND CHUCK'S NAVIGATING WAS WAY OUT!
THIS IS A SERIOUS MATTER ... YOU CAN'T BOTH BE RIGHT. GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE THE RESULTS OF OUR RECCE FLIGHT THIS MORNING ...

THE LONG HOURS OF WAITING DRAGGED OUT TILL AT LAST THE RECONNAISSANCE PLANE RETURNED.
BANG ON TARGET, COMMANDER! THERE'S NOT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT ABOUT IT – TARAPAN TOOK ONE HECK OF A PASTING LAST NIGHT!
YOU SEE ... I WAS RIGHT ALL THE TIME!

A GREAT WEIGHT SEEMED TO LIFT OFF SNOWY'S SHOULDERS.
THAT'S DINKUM! I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE GLAD TO BE WRONG – CHUCK –
SO MUCH FOR AUSSIE NAVIGATING! FIRST THEY BOMB US YANKS – NOW THEY TRY TO STOP US BOMBING JAPS! SOME ALLIES!
BUT TO CHUCK HARRIS THE FEUD WAS STILL ON SO FAR AS HE WAS CONCERNED.

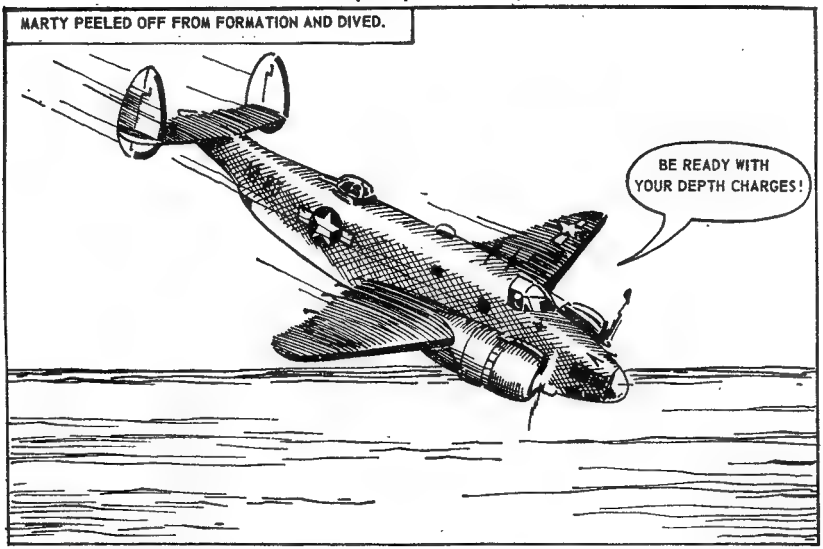
CHAPTER 4. Beach-Head Battle

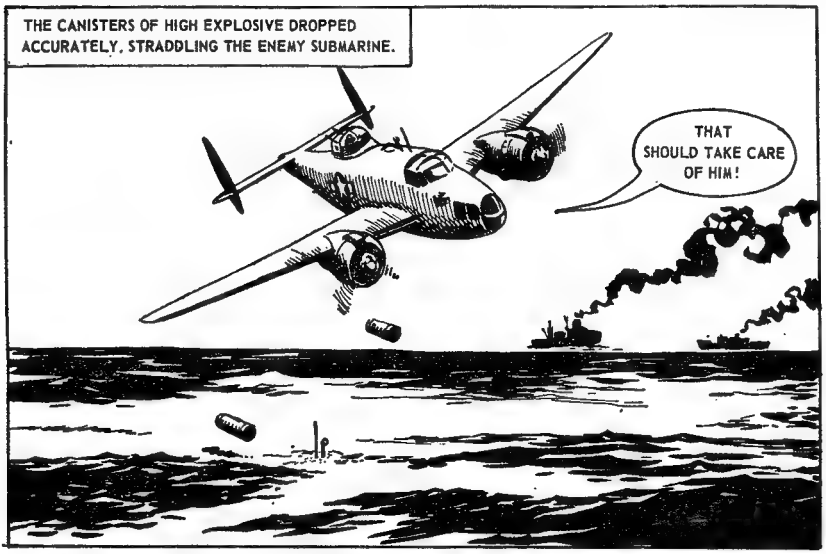
THE DAY FINALLY CAME FOR THE GREAT ATTACK. THE VENTURAS, ESCORTED BY LIGHTNING FIGHTERS, FLEW OUT ACROSS THE PACIFIC TO RENDEZVOUS WITH THE INVASION FORCE STEAMING ON TARAPAN.

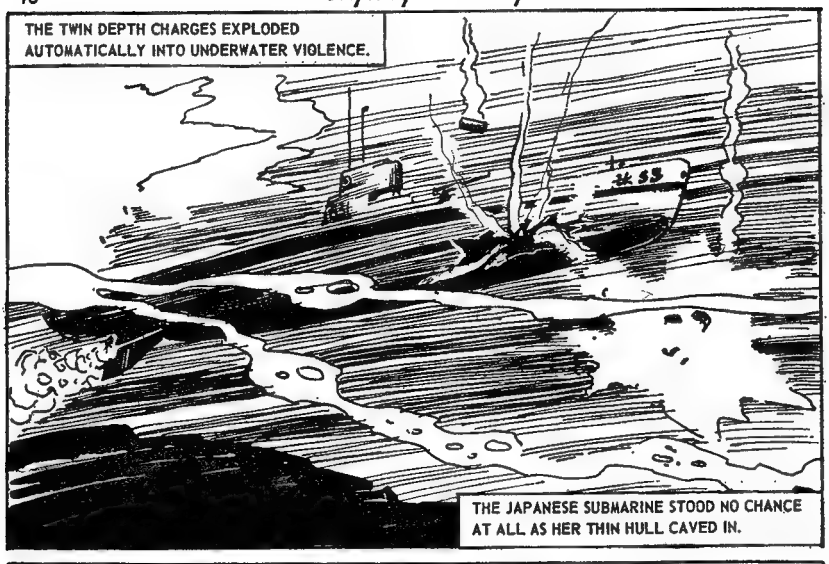


THE AIR CREWS LOOKED DOWN ON A HEARTENING SIGHT ... A GREAT ARMADA OF TRANSPORT SHIPS PROTECTED BY A NAVAL COVERING FORCE
YES, SIR, THAT SURE LOOKS GOOD! THOSE JAPS ON TARAPAN ARE GOING TO WONDER WHAT HIT THEM!
THEY'RE SURE DUE FOR A ROCKET!

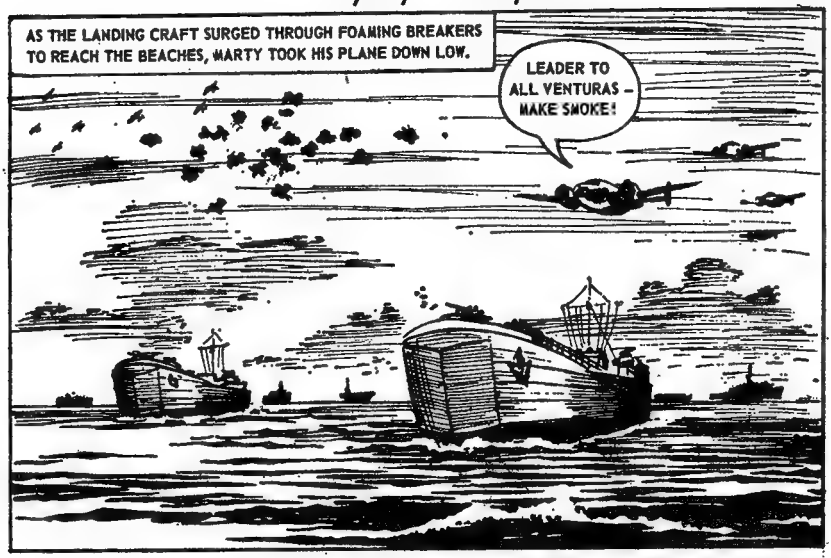
AS THEY CIRCLED THE FLEET ON RECONNAISSANCE, SNOWY SUDDENLY SHOUTED AN ALARM.
JAP SUBMARINE CREEPING UP ASTERN!
NOT FOR LONG ... WE'RE GOING DOWN!


MARTY PEELED OFF FROM FORMATION AND DIVED.
BE READY WITH YOUR DEPTH CHARGES!

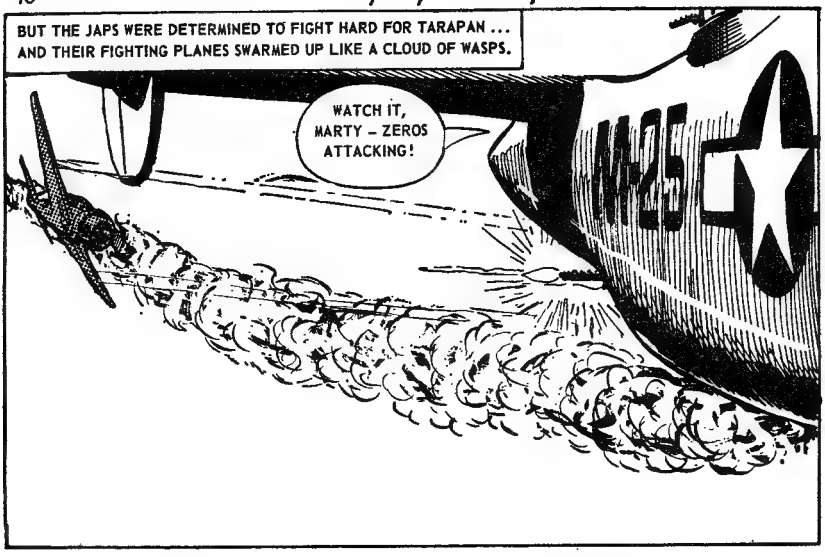

THE CANISTERS OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE DROPPED ACCURATELY, STRADDLING THE ENEMY SUBMARINE.
THAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF HIM!

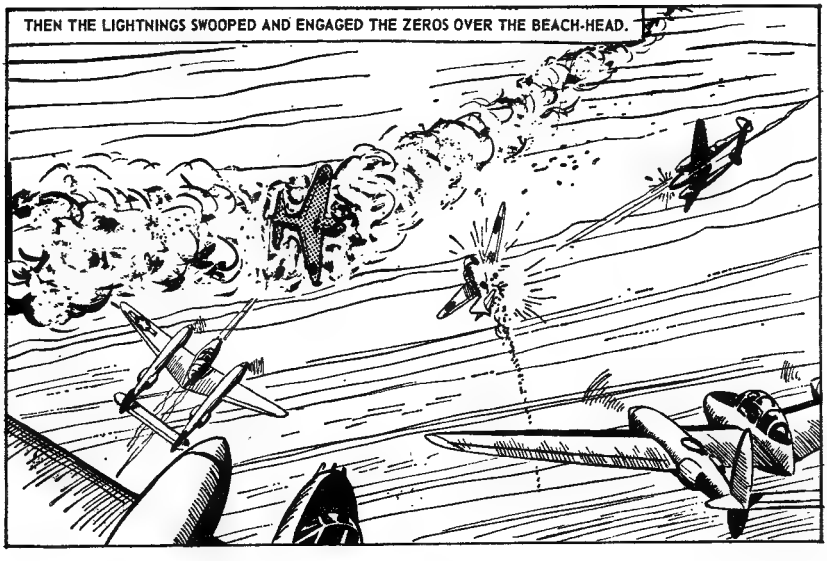

THE TWIN DEPTH CHARGES EXPLODED AUTOMATICALLY INTO UNDERWATER VIOLENCE.
THE JAPANESE SUBMARINE STOOD NO CHANCE AT ALL AS HER THIN HULL CAVED IN.

THE HOURS PASSED. THEN THE ISLAND OF TARAPAN, THAT VITAL CROSS-ROAD OF THE PACIFIC, SHOWED ON THE HORIZON.
THERE SHE IS! NOW TO GIVE THOSE JAPS WHAT THEY DESERVE!

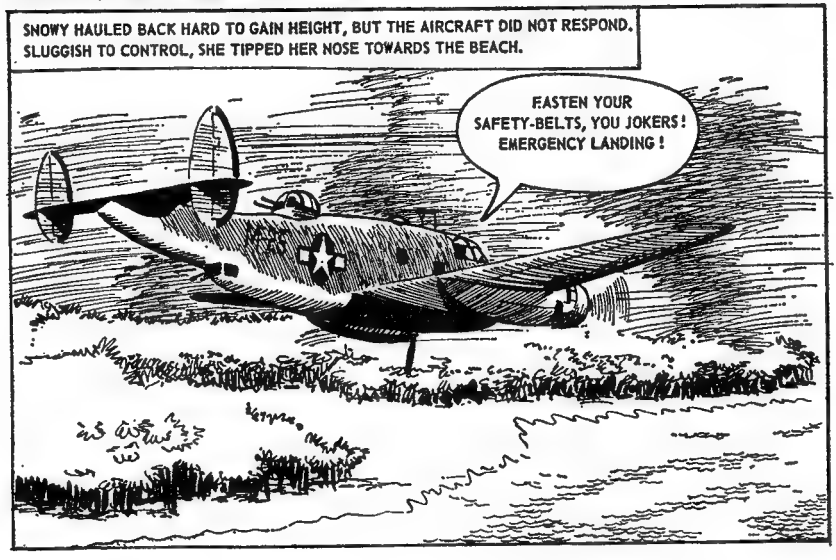

AS THE LANDING CRAFT SURGED THROUGH FOAMING BREAKERS TO REACH THE BEACHES, MARTY TOOK HIS PLANE DOWN LOW.
LEADER TO ALL VENTURAS – MAKE SMOKE!

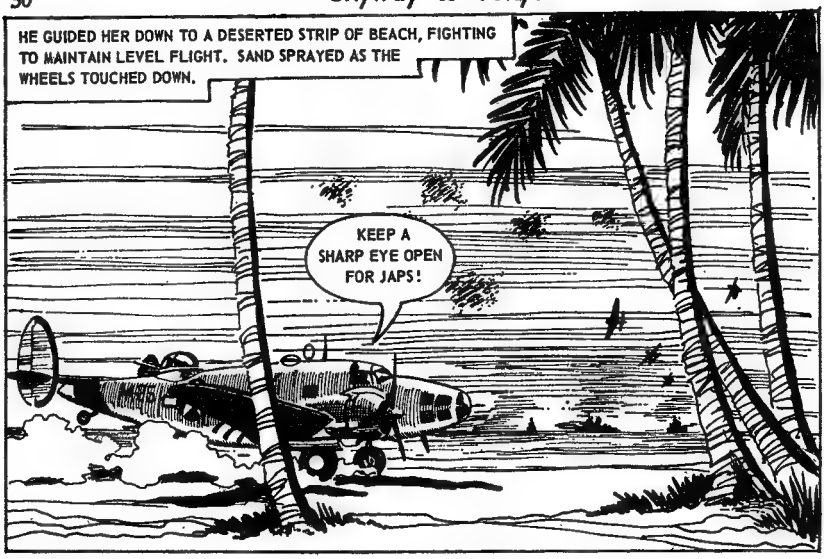
DENSE SMOKE BILLOWED OUT FROM THE LOW-FLYING VENTURAS, FORMING A SCREEN TO HIDE THE AMERICAN AND AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY WHO STORMED ASHORE.
THAT'S THE STUFF, YOU NAVY FLYERS – LAY IT DOWN GOOD AND THICK!


BUT THE JAPS WERE DETERMINED TO FIGHT HARD FOR TARAPAN ... AND THEIR FIGHTING PLANES SWARMED UP LIKE A CLOUD OF WASPS.
WATCH IT, MARTY – ZEROS ATTACKING!
M-25


THEN THE LIGHTNINGS SWOOPED AND ENGAGED THE ZEROS OVER THE BEACH-HEAD.

STILL LAYING SMOKE, MARTY ZIGZAGGED DESPERATELY AS JAP ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS BLASTED VICIOUSLY ALL ROUND HIM. THEN A PIECE OF SHRAPNEL STRUCK HOME.
THEY GOT ME ... SNOWY ...
IN A FLASH SNOWY GRASPED THE CO-PILOT'S CONTROL STICK.


SNOWY HAULED BACK HARD TO GAIN HEIGHT, BUT THE AIRCRAFT DID NOT RESPOND. SLUGGISH TO CONTROL, SHE TIPPED HER NOSE TOWARDS THE BEACH.
FASTEN YOUR SAFETY-BELTS, YOU JOKERS! EMERGENCY LANDING!


HE GUIDED HER DOWN TO A DESERTED STRIP OF BEACH, FIGHTING TO MAINTAIN LEVEL FLIGHT. SAND SPRAYED AS THE WHEELS TOUCHED DOWN.
KEEP A SHARP EYE OPEN FOR JAPS!

FORTUNATELY, MARTY'S HEAD WOUND WAS NOT SERIOUS, BUT THE DAMAGE TO THEIR PLANE STILL HAD TO BE ASSESSED – AND REPAIRED.
THAT LANDING WAS JUST GREAT, SNOWY. NOW WE'VE GOT TO LOCATE THE DAMAGE AND GET OFF THE DECK – FAST!
YOU AREN'T KIDDING – THIS SPOT SURE AIN'T NO HEALTH RESORT!

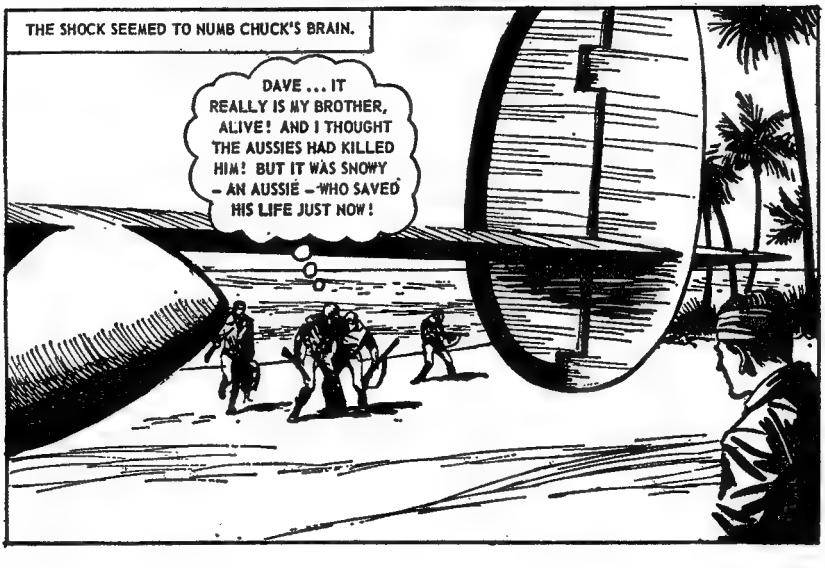
SNOWY KEPT WATCH WHILE THE THREE AMERICANS CHECKED THEIR AIRCRAFT.
I FIGURE IT MUST BE THE MAIN FUEL SUPPLY LINE FROM –
LOOK OUT – JAPS!

AN ENEMY PATROL WAS CHASING A LONE AMERICAN INFANTRYMAN ALONG THE BEACH ... WOUNDED, HE STUMBLED AND FELL. SNOWY LEAPT FORWARD ...
GET AWAY FROM HIM, YOU YELLOW MONKEYS!

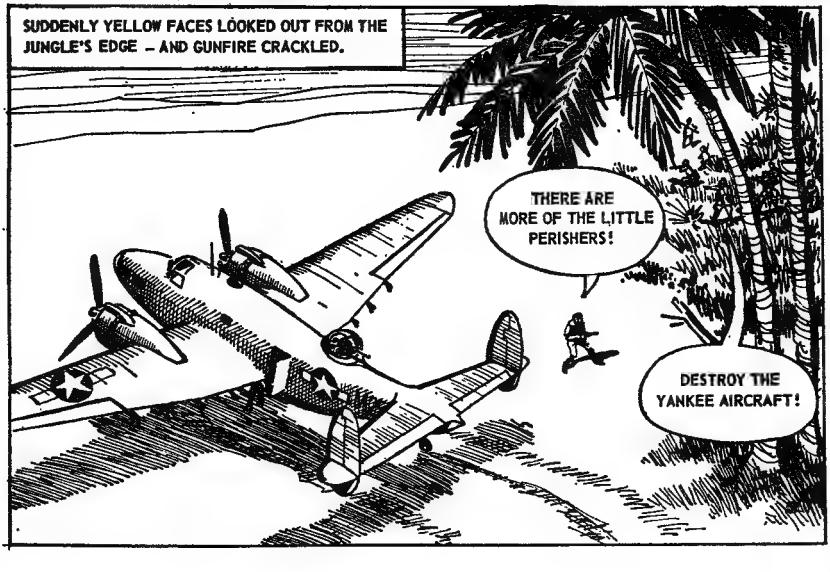
SNOWY REACHED THE WOUNDED MAN AND CROUCHED PROTECTIVELY ALONGSIDE HIM. HIS TOMMY-GUN SENT DEATH SLICING INTO THE JAPANESE ...
THAT'LL LARN YUH!
AIEE ... ARGH!

BIG FINN AND CHUCK RACED UP TO HELP.
HOLD 'EM, SNOWY — WE'RE COMING!
M25

THE ENEMY PATROL WAS WIPED OUT ... AND THEN CAME THE BIGGEST SHOCK OF ALL. AS CHUCK STARED DOWN AT THE WOUNDED AMERICAN –
DAVE ... MY BROTHER DAVE! I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
NOT ME, BOY – SURE GOOD TO SEE YUH, CHUCK.


THE SHOCK SEEMED TO NUMB CHUCK'S BRAIN.
DAVE ... IT REALLY IS MY BROTHER, ALIVE! AND I THOUGHT THE AUSSIES HAD KILLED HIM! BUT IT WAS SNOWY – AN AUSSIE – WHO SAVED HIS LIFE JUST NOW!

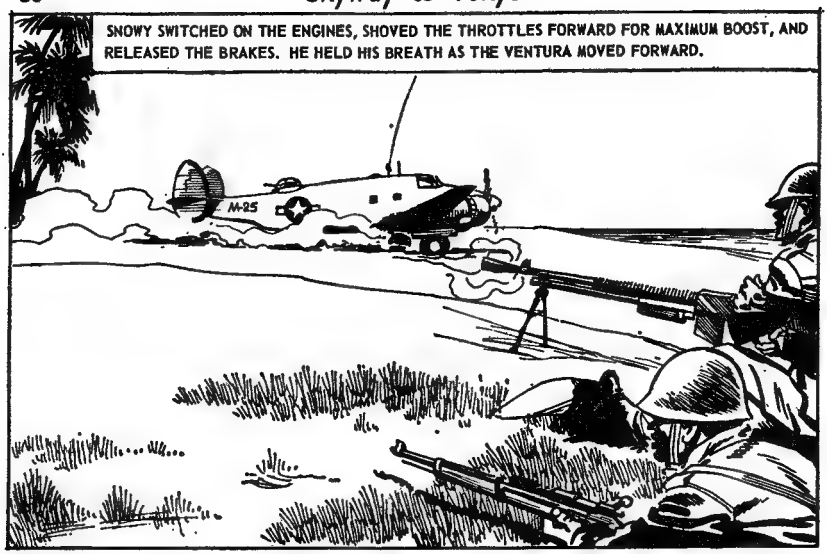
THERE WAS LITTLE TIME FOR A REUNION – OR AN APOLOGY. THEY WORKED FEVERISHLY TO GET THE VENTURA AIRBORNE.
GET STUCK IN, YOU FELLAS! GET SOME SPEED ON!


SUDDENLY YELLOW FACES LOOKED OUT FROM THE JUNGLE'S EDGE – AND GUNFIRE CRACKLED.
THERE ARE MORE OF THE LITTLE PERISHERS!
DESTROY THE YANKEE AIRCRAFT!

BIG FINN HURRIEDLY PULLED DAVE HARRIS INTO THE BOMB-BAY AS JAPANESE SOLDIERS RUSHED THE PLANE.
JUST RELAX, FELLA – WE'LL SOON HAVE YUH OUTA THIS!
25

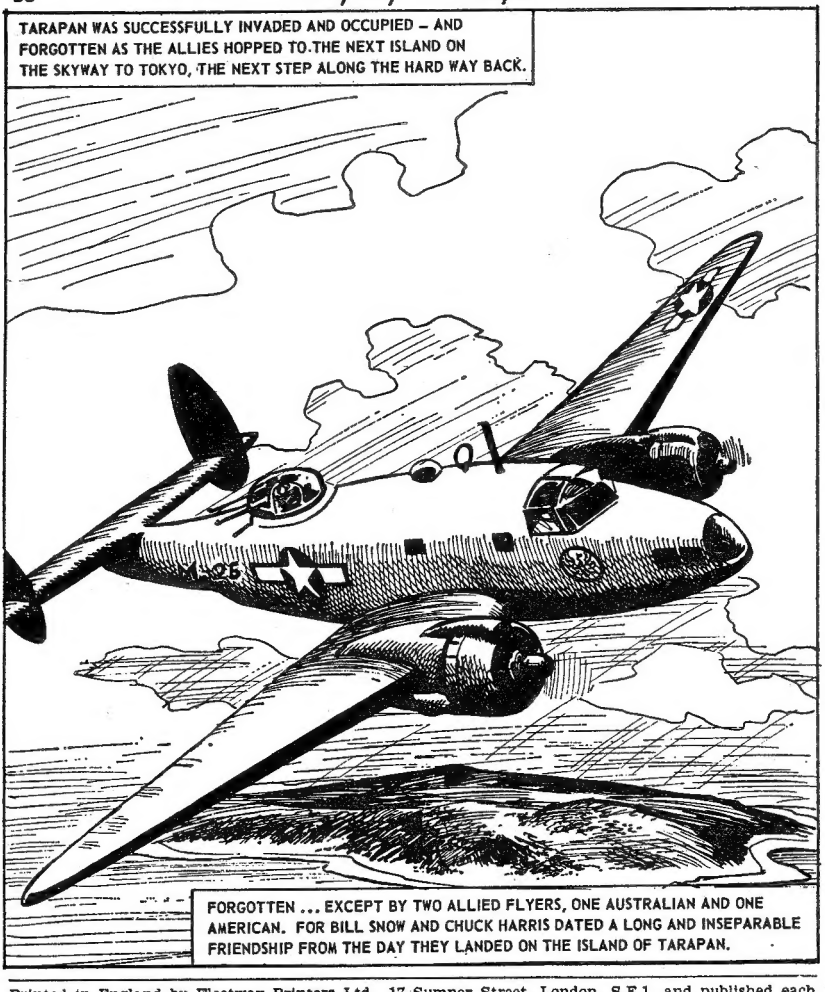
CHUCK CLIMBED INTO HIS DORSAL TURRET AND OPENED FIRE ON THE ADVANCING ENEMY. STREAMS OF HOT LEAD THINNED THEIR RANKS ...
NOW, YOU SLANT-EYED MORONS, COME AND GET A ONE-WAY TICKET TO JOIN YOUR HONOURABLE ANCESTORS!

NO SOONER HAD THEY DISPERSED THE JAPS AND FINISHED THEIR REPAIR JOB THAN MORE ENEMY SOLDIERS SPRANG SCREAMING OUT OF THE JUNGLE.
BANZAI! BANZAI!
TAKE HER UP, SNOWY – FAST!


SNOWY SWITCHED ON THE ENGINES, SHOVED THE THROTTLES FORWARD FOR MAXIMUM BOOST, AND RELEASED THE BRAKES. HE HELD HIS BREATH AS THE VENTURA MOVED FORWARD.
M-25

THE WHEELS SEEMED TO STICK IN THE SAND ... HE NUDGED HIS RUDDER PEDAL AND HAULED BACK ON THE COLUMN.
COME UP, YOU BEAUT! UP ... UP ...

FINALLY THE WINGS BIT INTO THE AIR AND LIFTED. THE BEACH FELL AWAY BELOW THEM ...
BOY, THAT WAS CLOSE! I THOUGHT WE'D NEVER MAKE IT!
YOU DID FINE, SNOWY! YOU SAVED MY BROTHER'S LIFE BACK THERE ... I SURE HAD YOU FIGURED WRONG, AND I'M SORRY.
THEN CHUCK HARRIS CAME FORWARD TO THE PILOTS' CABIN.
FORGET IT, CHUCK – I'M JUST GLAD YOUR BROTHER'S OKAY. HERE, SHAKE ON IT.
AND CHUCK GRIPPED THE AUSTRALIAN'S HAND AT LAST.



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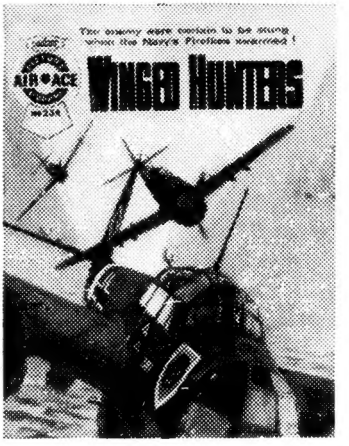

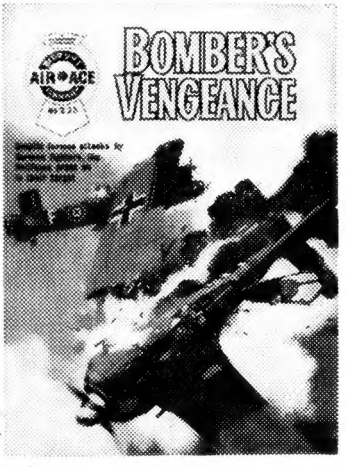

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